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# Ideals of charity

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# IDEALS OF CHARITY





# IDEALS OF CHARITY

BY  
VIRGINIA M. CRAWFORD

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# IDEALS OF CHARITY

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTORY

THE days are long gone by when Catholics, partly through necessity, partly from tradition, felt impelled to hold themselves aloof from the social and political life of England, when they lived a little community apart, practising their faith, intermarrying with one another, and regarding with grave suspicion any attempt to mix on equal terms with their Protestant fellow-countrymen. The gradual process of our emergence from the catacombs, to use a favourite phrase of Cardinal Manning's, lasted from the date of Catholic Emancipation almost to the close of the nineteenth century. It was undoubtedly hastened considerably by the steady stream of converts that for half a century has poured into the Church in this country, converts many of whom saw little virtue in effecting their own self-effacement, or in deliberately abandoning fertile fields of social labour. To-day, in the first decade of the twentieth century, the

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process may be assumed to be complete, and Catholics by common consent occupy in this land a position in no sense inferior to that of other people. Their ability is unhampered by any restriction, whether of law or of custom, and the degree of their social, religious, and political importance is a matter that lies wholly in their own hands. It is regulated only by the fervour of their faith and the measure of their activity.

What may be said of the Catholic body as a whole is of course equally true of Catholic women. Our opportunities for service to-day are as wide as those of other women, the need for our co-operation fully as urgent. Yet it is a fact that workers fall far short of the demand, that if a few do much, many do nothing, or next to nothing. True, as regards the building of churches and schools and almsgiving in its narrower interpretation, Catholics have little to reproach themselves with. It is in the wider sphere of educational and social activity, in all that is conveniently summed up in the phrase social service, that we Catholic women have as yet failed to fill the place that should be ours by right. We have an undeveloped civic sense and a very partial realisation of the responsibilities laid on us by worldly advantages. Generous and warm-hearted women, who are ready to give themselves and their money for the relief of distress, still fail to realise the need for studying the problems of the day in the light of sound

Catholic social principles. Yet they have only to turn to the Encyclicals of Leo XIII. for enlightenment. Others, filled with vague apprehension at the social changes in progress around us, withdraw ostentatiously from all participation in what appear to them the dangerous tendencies of the time. Yet mere timidity can never produce an effective policy, and it leaves the denomination or society that gives way to it helpless in a backwater, while the stream of life flows onward unimpeded. Others, again, live so wholly in a little domestic world of their own contriving, and are so out of touch with the broader issues of life, that the struggles and temptations of women less happily circumstanced than themselves leave them lamentably callous. In a word, we all have a great deal still to learn.

Women act, as a rule, rather in response to their hearts than to their heads ; it has often needed a sudden peril or moral danger to rouse them from the policy of *laissez-faire* that under normal circumstances they are minded to pursue. The present social movement among Catholic women in northern Italy is in no small measure the outcome of the attempts to legalise divorce, first made by the Italian Government some five or six years ago. Catholic women felt that their home life was imperilled, and that it was their duty to defend it, and for the first time in recent years they organised themselves for what was practically a political purpose: *i.e.*, to oppose a Government



measure. Women, such as Luisa Anzoletti, the well-known authoress, who had never before contemplated the possibility of public activity, came forward as lecturers and speakers, and took a prominent part in what proved a great national agitation. The opposition was successful, for the time at least, and Catholic women had learnt in the meanwhile an invaluable lesson in the advantages of courage and co-operation in a righteous cause, a lesson that is bearing good fruit to-day. It may be seen in the growth of a definitely feminist movement throughout the peninsula.

English women should scarcely stand in need of any such crisis to rouse them to a full sense of their social and religious responsibilities. The barriers of convention and custom that formerly barred the way to women's activity have been flung down for us by others ; the Victorian era has brought about a fundamental change in the possibilities of work open to us, and to-day we have only to reap where others have sown. No one now, however old-fashioned, ventures to assert that women have not done good work as poor-law guardians and members of education committees, that it is unwomanly to study medicine, or necessarily demoralising to home life to have acquired a facility for speaking in public. If Catholic women have done these things in a lesser degree than their non-Catholic sisters—and we have to admit that

this is so—it is not so much that they have not progressed like other people, but that they were more heavily handicapped at the outset. They started, so to speak, farther back, weighted with the inherited prejudices of three centuries of legal disabilities, prejudices that had come to be invested in many minds with a form of religious sanction. What we need most at the moment to disarm a reproach that our critics are not slow to fling at us, is a wider acquaintance with the opportunities for work open to us, and a keener appreciation of the advantages that will accrue to the Church in England from our taking advantage of them. In other words, we must acquire more knowledge and understanding of actual social problems.

For Catholics this study is rather more complicated than for other people, as it is impossible for us to accept every current theory without investigation. There are, it is true, many subjects—such as temperance, hygiene, housing and allotments—which can be regarded from a purely national or civic standpoint; but there are others—education, the marriage-laws, and everything bearing on the maintenance or destruction of family life—in which the religious aspect cannot be ignored. Just where we should co-operate with non-Catholics, and where we should assert our religious convictions in order to pursue a line of our own, will always supply matter for discussion, and no hard-and-fast line can be drawn. The basis, however, of social

work should surely be co-operation with others wherever this is possible without the sacrifice of any definite and important principle. Points of agreement should be sought rather than points of controversy. Often a whole series of conflicting considerations have to be taken into account before any course of action can be entered upon. At other times it is the spirit in which the work is undertaken that must differ, rather than the actual methods employed. Thus, a considerable proportion of non-Catholic social workers candidly confess that they are working to benefit men's bodies, and that men's souls must take care of themselves; that they regard material welfare only, and have no spiritual aims, which aims indeed they sometimes go so far as to regard with dislike and suspicion as vitiating philanthropic effort. Catholic workers, on the contrary, must consider souls as well as bodies, must regard material progress as a means towards a spiritual end, must balance the possible ultimate spiritual loss against the obvious immediate material gain. To do this with any sureness of judgment, certain broad underlying principles have to be grasped in their probable bearings on questions of the moment.

When the importance of this is once realised, it becomes obvious that the pious and kind-hearted individual who refuses to work through any committee, or in association with any responsible person, on the ground that she likes to do good in

her own way and select her own recipients of charity as she pleases, is not only throwing away invaluable opportunities, but very probably doing tangible social harm by encouraging undeserving persons in a course of begging and thriftlessness. When one knows the trouble and patience and sense of responsibility with which committees of experienced workers discuss a case before venturing on a decision, the haphazard generosity of irresponsible people becomes, to say the least, not a little exasperating. Such people are by no means rare at the present time, in spite of all that has been done by societies, such as the Charity Organisation Society, to draw attention to the evils they encourage. Whenever a worthless person is brought to justice for obtaining money under false pretences, evidence is given in the police-court of the surprising sums—sometimes even £5 and £10 notes—of which he or she has become possessed by the simple process of writing a few pathetic falsehoods to people of well-known softness of head and heart! The money has usually been sent on the impulse of the moment, without the smallest investigation, and sums are yearly wasted in this fashion which would go far to lift some deserving charities from penury to affluence.

A very slight acquaintance with social principles would convince people of the foolishness of such conduct. And indeed I would urge the study of

social problems upon all women, whether or no they intend to devote themselves to active philanthropic work. We can never separate ourselves wholly from our poorer neighbours; we all have obligations towards them; we live by their labour, and their welfare is intimately affected by our conduct and sense of justice. Often a little knowledge would put an end to much apparent want of consideration on the one side, and consequent bitter feelings on the other. If, for instance, well-to-do women would study the laws regulating hours of labour, they might refrain from ordering their gowns two days before they are needed, realising that such orders can only be executed by keeping the girls at work long after legal hours, to the grave detriment of their health. Or, if they knew something of the moral and economic evils that spring from irregular employment produced by season-trades, they might perhaps find it possible to distribute their orders for clothes and upholstery and what not more evenly over the year, so that employers of labour could keep their hands engaged all the year round. Again, if they had arrived at any adequate conception of the horrors of "sweated industries," they would cease to wear ready-made clothing, or to scramble for so-called bargains at sale time, but would as far as possible employ direct labour and pay a fair wage for work done. A good deal that poor people, who are the sufferers, not unnaturally

attribute to deliberate selfishness on the part of the rich, is largely the result of ignorance of the conditions under which the working classes live. But it is, of course, a question how far such ignorance is excusable. And when the very persons who display this lamentable lack of consideration for those whose labour they purchase, are professing Catholics, and punctilious in the discharge of their religious duties, it is obvious that they bring religion into disrepute, and alienate the working classes from the Church.

In France the emphatic need for a methodical study of social conditions, not only as a necessary preliminary to reform, but in the interests of just dealing in everyday life, has been grasped far more widely than here. The amount of literature that is being issued at the present time by Catholic writers on social problems is a perpetual source of surprise even to those familiar with the strength of the social movement among French Catholics. With a thoroughness and a method characteristic of the race, every abuse, every injustice, is made the subject of a searching *enquête*, the results of which are sorted and tabulated and published in book or pamphlet. Every year a large volume, describing the activities and experiments of the previous twelvemonth, is issued under the title of the "Guide Social,"<sup>1</sup> a veritable storehouse of information, admirably classified. And to this

<sup>1</sup> Lecoivre, Paris, price 2 frs.

work contribute not only professional authors, but men and women of the leisured classes, who have been inspired to their apostolate mainly by the teachings of Leo XIII. That Catholic women have been no whit behind the stronger sex, may be seen by anyone who cares to consult Max Turmann's weighty volume *Initiatives Féminines*.<sup>1</sup> One can read there how wide a field their activity covers, and on how thorough an understanding of existing industrial conditions it is based. In England, alas! we have as yet nothing to correspond to a Catholic social movement of such value and extent.

There are still some among us who think that if they subscribe to a fair number of charities, nothing further should be expected from them, and I cannot but think that a certain class of charity sermon is largely responsible for this inadequate view. How often are we not told from the pulpit that if we cannot give personal help we can always give money, that all we are asked to do is to write a cheque, and so on. However true it may be in the individual case, it is certainly not true in its general application. At best, the belief produces what the Rev. C. Plater, S.J., terms "indolent philanthropy," and students of the *Graves de Communi* Encyclical will find in it no warrant for such a theory. The idea that we can contract out of our social and human obligations

<sup>1</sup> Victor Lecoffre, Paris, 1905, price 3.50 frs.

by money payments, large or small, is at the root not only of much misplaced charity and wasteful expenditure, but of the false relationship between rich and poor that frequently prevails. Individual thought and devotion are needed far more than money—are, indeed, in the long run, the only things that will avail. It is a mere commonplace of philanthropic experience that the most successful ventures are not those founded and endowed with large sums and started with every material advantage, but rather those that have begun in a very small way, and have struggled upwards through poverty and discouragement, thanks to the self-sacrificing labours of one or two. And yet we all talk at times as though money were the one thing needful.

What we have to aim at to-day is the cultivation of a broader outlook on social questions, and the bringing of a wider knowledge to the elucidation of specific problems. Inevitably in the past our efforts have been mainly parochial—the parish church and the parish schools have absorbed our energies. This is so true that even foreign missions in countries such as India and Uganda, within the boundaries of our own Empire, fail to interest us, and we probably give less to foreign missions in proportion to our numbers than any Catholics in Europe. These characteristics, however, are but relics of a state of things now happily on the wane. Already there are signs that in the



years to come there may grow up here, as in France, a veritable school of Catholic social science, which will not only urge upon us the duties of good citizenship, but will lay down for us the broad lines of social progress. From it we should gain insight into many of the perplexing problems of the moment—parental rights and where they begin and end, the effect on home life of the State-feeding of children, the probable influence of old age pensions on the promotion of thrift, and so on. Such a school would in time give rise to a Catholic social literature, not imported from abroad, but in touch with the special conditions of English industrial life. It would be the outcome at once of practical work among the poor, and of a clear apprehension of Christian principles, as distinct from the suggestions of political opportunism.

When such a body of workers and writers has grown up among us, I like to believe that they will lose no time in turning their attention to the boys and girls of our colleges and secondary schools. These are still cut off far more than is wholesome, not only from inter-collegiate interests, but from the ordinary life of the nation. But if inspiring courses of lectures on the duties of citizenship and on possible careers of civic and social utility, were given from time to time, and if trouble were taken to bring our boys and girls into touch with some definite social work, as is done at nearly all

the English public schools and at many girls' High schools, the narrowness that comes from isolation would be counteracted. We should create by degrees a Catholic public really interested in social progress, and annex our workers of the future in the first fervour of their youthful energy.

## CHAPTER II

### HOW AND WHERE TO TRAIN

WHEN once the harmfulness of promiscuous almsgiving is admitted and the need for discrimination understood, the question of how to fit oneself for exercising discrimination wisely is not hard to solve. Clearly, the social worker, like workers in every other department of life, must have some special knowledge of his own subject—knowledge both practical and theoretical. In a word, he must train. Just how much he can expect to acquire from training is a matter on which even experts are not agreed. If, on the one hand, there are still people who decry it as of secondary importance, there are others who are apt to credit it with far more than it can ever confer. It is quite easy to be both trained and incompetent, just as it is quite possible to be a certificated teacher and singularly uncultured. A narrow, unsympathetic nature cannot be trained into a kindly, tolerant one; nor can good judgment be implanted, though it will certainly be developed, by knowledge and ex-

perience. Perhaps the most effectual argument in support of training is that it is only when people begin to train that they realise how ignorant they are. And beginners must be content to begin at the beginning. I can remember how, when a quarter of a century ago, I offered myself, as the rawest of recruits, for some work in the East-end, I was assured with painful candour by a recognised authority in social work that I should be more trouble than I was worth for at least six months, and how I was set to do, under due supervision, all the tiresome, odd jobs of a very busy office. The months there supplied a fundamental training for which one has been grateful ever since. And I believe every social worker with similar experience will bear similar testimony. Probably the people with the best natural gifts for influencing others for good—a quick sympathy, a pleasant manner, a cheerful spirit under discouraging circumstances—are the very ones who will realise most fully the sense of helplessness that arises from want of knowledge, and who will regret most bitterly the blunders due to their own inexperience. And it is they, too, who will assimilate quickest all that training at its best can undoubtedly confer.

The actual question of how to obtain suitable training presents no difficulties for would-be workers living within reach of London. Of recent years various higher educational centres for adult students have been organised, at which men and

women can either enter for a full course of training, lasting one or two years, in some branch of social economics, or can follow any single course of lectures at choice. Besides these, there exist an ever-increasing number of scattered opportunities in connection with settlements, technical schools, women's clubs, and also on, for studying through lectures and classes, social problems of the moment, under really expert teachers. Probably the most efficient method of self-instruction is to engage concurrently in practical work and theoretic study—I mean to enter upon some congenial activity as helper to a responsible leader, and at the same time to devote a few hours each week to following a course of lectures amplified by systematic home-reading on some subject bearing more or less directly on one's active work. Settlement workers should be encouraged by their "heads" to follow some such plan. Even when considerable familiarity with the practical aspects of any given subject has been acquired, a course of lectures on its theoretic or historical aspects often proves extremely helpful. I remember after many years of work as a poor-law guardian learning a great deal I did not know from a short course of lectures on the history of the English Poor-law, given by Mr Sidney Webb at the London School of Economics (Kingsway, W.C.)

This school is one of the institutions to which the attention of serious students, male and female,

should be drawn. Every session it issues an exhaustive syllabus of lectures to be given by recognised authorities on every branch of political and economic science. Of it Mr Leslie A. St L. Toke, in his valuable little pamphlet, *Some Methods of Social Study* (Catholic Truth Society, 1d.), writes :

“This busy institution, with its thirty-seven lecturers and about 1500 students, is the Faculty of Economics of the University of London. In its crowded lecture-rooms may be heard lectures on almost any subject connected with social science, from elementary economics to palæography, from commercial geography to constitutional law, from employers' liability to statistical method. Its lectures and its rapidly increasing library, which already contains some 50,000 volumes, are open to any who will pay the very moderate fees.”

The training to be acquired there, however, is probably more thorough and more strenuous than the average social worker would need or desire. An institution more likely to meet his or her precise needs is the School of Sociology and Social Economics, which is worked in close co-operation with the Charity Organisation Society, and, like it, has its headquarters at Denison House, Vauxhall Bridge Road, S.W. This school, too, can claim a certain number of students who take a full course of study lasting one or two years, but the majority of its pupils are already engaged in some form or other of social work, and content them-

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selves with one or more courses of lectures. These are both theoretical and practical; and if at Denison House you can study outlines of sociology and fundamental conceptions of economics, you can also join lectures and discussion classes for the elucidation of the theory and practice of charity, the duties of school-managers, methods of thrift, and all the other perplexing questions that may spring up in the course of ordinary district visiting. Here, too, fees are extremely low, and seekers after knowledge can always obtain individual advice as to courses of study and private reading. Here, too, should they wish it, they can be put in touch with some local Charity Organisation Society committee with a view to acquiring practical experience under definite guidance.

The very name of the Charity Organisation Society brings us on to debatable ground. The old prejudice against it has been scarcely modified by time, and people continue to revile it and to extol it with equal vigour and sincerity. Catholics, on the whole, are more apt to be found among its critics than its friends. They often feel that its rules of exclusion are too rigid, that its attitude is apt to be pharisaic, and that its lengthy investigations, that may lead to nothing, are somewhat exasperating. They sometimes forget that though the Society opposes persistently a system of mere doles, it often gives generously to, and takes endless trouble over, a

family, in order to restore it to a wage-earning position. It is, unhappily, a fact that begging in London has become an art, and that we all have to beware of lending ourselves to deliberate imposture, as well as to mere injudicious almsgiving. No one has done so much as the Charity Organisation Society to expose and discredit the methods of the begging letter-writer and others of his kin, and for that alone, society—the gullible prey on which the impostors fatten—owes a debt of gratitude. I am very far from recommending anyone to adopt Charity Organisation methods and principles *en bloc*. But that is not to say that much that is extremely useful to the social worker may not be learnt from a term of apprenticeship in one of their district offices. He will be taught there once for all the futility and wastefulness of mere almsgiving divorced from personal investigation and service. He will learn necessary methods of enquiry, and gain some familiarity with available methods of relief, and will be put in touch with other charitable agencies. Finally, he—or she—will acquire business-like habits in the writing of letters, the filling in of case-papers, and so on. What he will have to guard against in after life, is the conviction that a person whom the Charity Organisation Society will not help is therefore unhelpable. Any society has of course a perfect right to frame its own rules and create its own standard; unhappily the Charity Organisation



Society indulges in the pretension of imposing its standard on all other workers. We, as Catholics, can never act on the general rule that a person with a bad record in the past is never to be helped in the future, or that a man's ill-deeds are to be brought up against him, however many years may have passed in the interval. Undoubtedly, a person of good character should be helped in one way, and a person of no character in another; but Christian charity can make no hard-and-fast rules where men's souls as well as their bodies are concerned. Nevertheless, due regard being had to these conditions, every beginner in social work will do well to familiarise himself with Charity Organisation Society methods.

One of the newest centres for the dissemination of knowledge to the social student is the British Institute of Social Service (11 Southampton Row, W.C.). The motto of the association, "The experience of all for the benefit of each," sums up neatly its original aim. It exists to collect and disseminate information to social workers, and to promote the development of new ventures in social service. It has an almost exact counterpart in Paris, in the admirable *Musée Social* (5 rue Las Cases); but whereas the *Musée Social* is the fortunate possessor of a large endowment, the British Institute is dependent on its annual subscribers, and awaits wider public support for its fuller development. In practice, its main business

consists in replying to enquiries. People, whether members or not, may apply to the Institute for information on any point bearing on philanthropy or social economics, and will receive a reply with a list of books and authorities to consult on their special subject. It is obvious what a help this might be both to the busy and the inexperienced worker. Again, secretaries of societies can ascertain there what dangers there are of overlapping with other societies, and would-be workers can be put in touch with under-staffed associations, etc. Much progress has already been made with the formation of a library of all recent books on social science. Membership of this most useful association is gained by an annual subscription of £1; moreover, the quarterly organ of the Institute, *Progress*, costs only 2s. 6d. a year, and is well worth subscribing to. It contains a complete bibliography of all books and pamphlets on social questions published in the previous three months, besides articles of much practical value. Perhaps one of the most attractive features of the British Institute is that, being still, so to speak, in its infancy—it is but three years old—it has not yet crystallised into set official ways. It is specially anxious to retain a youthful openness of mind, and not to allow the red tape of routine to stifle its active sympathy with all forms of human suffering.

A modest institution that should be mentioned here, as it fills a distinct want where women's

welfare is concerned, is The Women's Institute (92 Victoria Street, S.W.) Educationally, its special work is the training of female secretaries in type-writing, shorthand, book-keeping, and in all those habits of neatness and precision which differentiate so unmistakably the trained worker from her untrained sister. Only twelve pupils can be received at one time, and the training, which lasts a twelvemonth, costs £35. It is intended primarily, of course, for those who desire to earn their livelihood as private secretaries; but it is worth noting that the course would immeasurably increase the efficiency of anyone who aimed at filling any responsible post, whether paid or unpaid, as secretary to a philanthropic society or institute of social service. Such posts are continually increasing in number, and cannot be efficiently filled by untrained women. Side by side with these opportunities for definite training, the Women's Institute combines the features of an information bureau for all that appertains to women's work and progress, and of a social club where isolated women may find recreation and workers may be brought into friendly relations with one another. The club rooms are cheerful and pleasant, and membership of the club (£1, 1s. a year for ordinary members, and 10s. 6d. for women holding professional appointments) would be found in many ways advantageous for women workers living alone or in the suburbs, or under circumstances

which preclude much congenial society at home. In point of fact, the five hundred club members are, for the most part, professional women. The weekly club at-homes, and the organised debates and lectures, together with the use of the reference and lending libraries, are all valuable features of an institution that has always kept in view the intellectual as well as the social welfare of its members. It need hardly be added that it is wholly undenominational, and no Catholic need fear to find herself in an uncongenial atmosphere.

Apart from intellectual training, there are many practical accomplishments in which efficiency would add greatly to the value of, say, a settlement worker. Thus, ladies would be in great request who held a cookery diploma and could take personal supervision of a soup-kitchen, or who were adepts at cutting out and could take charge of a clothing club. Unhappily these accomplishments, though comparatively easy to acquire, now that Polytechnics and schools of cookery are within reach of almost everyone, are extremely difficult to find, women's education in England still running so exclusively on literary lines. Piano players, too, are much rarer than they used to be, and yet no club staff can be held complete without one. Even when it comes to such simple things as keeping the accounts of a coal or boot club, reading aloud, telling stories to children, or supervising a sewing class, one comes across many

girls of the upper classes, presumably well educated, who are quite unable to do any of these things. The truth is, they have not yet grasped sufficiently the duty of cultivating whatever talent nature may have endowed them with ; and although they would admit that paid work requires some qualifications, they are cheerfully prepared to undertake voluntary work without any qualifications at all.

An organisation which will be found of the greatest utility by anyone who wishes to cultivate her technical skill is the Home Arts and Industries Association (Royal Albert Hall, Kensington Gore). Its very *raison d'être* is the training of the voluntary teacher. Not only are courses of lessons given in such subjects as basket-making, wood-carving, leather-work, metal repoussé and book-binding, but every sort of help is afforded in the shape of patterns, models, etc., to those anxious to organise a class. The teaching given by the association is most excellent, usually to small classes of five or six pupils, and the fees are extremely moderate. Every summer an exhibition is held of the work of all the affiliated classes, when crowds of ladies with their pupils come from all parts of England to study the exhibits and compare notes. The work was primarily organised for the benefit of our rural population, but any worker interested in boys' clubs or crippled children would probably find proficiency in one of the handicrafts taught by the association of considerable utility.

## CHAPTER III

### THE NEED FOR CO-OPERATION IN CHARITY

#### I. *The Ladies of Charity.*

"It is a good thing for us, who pride ourselves on our progressive ideas and imagine we are "up-to-date" and "twentieth-century men," to discover that many of our most "modern" and "original" methods, both in philanthropy and Church work, were known and in full swing 250 years ago, and emanated from the brain of one man, and that man a poor peasant priest of the French Church."

So writes, and very truly, the Honourable and Reverend James Adderley in his popular life of *Monsieur Vincent*, known to us as St Vincent de Paul. It is, however, no less true to say that if some pious people could only be convinced that organisation and method are neither "modern" nor "original," they would be less prejudiced against them; if they could only be brought to realise that St Vincent emphatically condemned casual methods of relief, and strove to effect the co-ordination of philanthropic effort in his day in

order that nothing should be wasted and a greater proportion of the poor wisely helped, they would perhaps relinquish their belief that indiscriminate alms-giving is somehow a note of true Catholic charity. Partly because problems of poverty vary less from age to age than people are apt to assume, partly, too, because the inspirations of Saints have a way of proving maxims of wisdom for all time, the rules drawn up for his lay-workers by St Vincent in the early years of the sixteenth century are, in all essentials, as applicable to-day as they were then. The mere fact that the Association of the Ladies of Charity travelled from France to England by way of Mexico—for it was there that Cardinal Vaughan first had his attention drawn to its beneficent activity—shows how adaptable the organisation is to varying circumstances of age and clime, how, in the closing words of Lady Lovat's address at the Catholic Truth Conference at Preston last year, anyone joining it may rest assured that "she is enrolling herself in a band of workers blessed by the Church, inaugurated by a Saint, and perfectly fitted for the needs and requirements of the present time."

The Association has now existed among us for eight years, and those of us who can remember how isolated Catholic social workers were before the inauguration of either the Ladies of Charity or the Catholic Social Union, how difficult it was to get into touch with other workers, or even to

get to know what was being done in other parishes besides one's own, will gladly testify to the immense good it has achieved among us. Personally, I have no hesitation in asserting that much more work is being done, and done much better, owing to its existence. Far more money, too, is available, and greater facilities are found for developing fresh forms of activity as the need arises. Volunteers for work and over-burdened workers in search of helpers are brought into touch by the assistant-director, Father Adrian Weld-Blundell (The Convent, Carlisle Place, Westminster). So, too, impoverished parishes receive help for their local *œuvres* from the central funds. Thus, by degrees, a body of experienced Catholic workers is growing up, bound together by the common aims of the Association, imbued, through the monthly services, with something of the spirit of St Vincent, which in the end may come to cover London as in a net-work, in the place of the isolated workers of the past, who often had to struggle, harassed and discouraged, with a task beyond their powers. All Catholic women to whom this ideal appeals (and to which of us does it not?) should surely join an association from which they will receive much help, spiritual and material, while themselves doing their share in promoting an organisation which must depend upon numbers for its ultimate success.

Centralised as it is under a single authority,



the association is none the less strictly parochial in its local activities. All work undertaken by Ladies of Charity as such, must be under the direction of the parish priest, must be carried on only with his sanction and support. In parishes containing resident members, a parochial association is easily erected, with its local secretary and its monthly meeting. Where no resident members exist and the need for workers is obviously great, there have grown up the familiar settlements. And undoubtedly it is these settlements which form the most attractive achievement of the Ladies of Charity in London to-day. For though settlements are often due in their inception to individual zeal and self-sacrifice, no settlement can exist for long without some organisation behind it, some source from which fresh residents can be drawn, some central authority from whom advice can be sought and authoritative decisions occasionally obtained; and that necessary and constant support, which non-Catholic settlements derive from many and various sources, Catholic settlements in the Westminster diocese have gained from the Association of the Ladies of Charity.

I should like to say at once that a Catholic settlement, as I conceive it, differs in several fundamental essentials from the many admirably organised institutions run by our non-Catholic friends. Both, it is true, may undertake identical

activities : may promote mothers' meetings, may co-operate in the work of the Children's Country Holiday Fund and other societies, may encourage thrift and temperance by various devices ; but they will do it from totally different motives. I have heard settlements extolled by non-Catholics as convenient centres for social study, as a means of familiarising oneself at first-hand with actual economic problems, while the inhabitants of the district seemed to be regarded much as the raw medical student regards hospital patients. Even where a less crude view prevails and the residents are animated by a genuine love for their less fortunate fellow-citizens, their work is mainly educative, sometimes palliative, rarely spiritual. Many excellent virtues are inculcated : thrift, cleanliness, sobriety ; but the soul is ignored. In a Catholic settlement the soul comes first. A great deal may be done for the body. The children will be fed, the boys and girls drilled, the mothers helped to provide clothing for their families ; but these are all means to an end—that the people shall be better and more faithful Catholics, more regular in the discharge of their religious duties, more edifying in their home life. The success of the work is tested by this standard. And if this is true of Catholic settlements in general, it is emphatically true of all those under the direction of the Ladies of Charity. They are bound to keep their patron, St Vincent, always before their

eyes; they are members of a religious organisation, and if they leave their homes and migrate from West to East, it is with the definite object of helping to save the souls of their poorer co-religionists, and in so doing to save also their own.

All this, as Catholics know, is perfectly compatible with a very happy, cheerful, community life, which need alarm no one. Rules, though few and simple, there must be, where a number of women are living together, and daily Mass and fixed times for prayer if the spiritual end is to be kept well in view, and the residents saved from being wholly absorbed in the day-to-day external activities. Life in a settlement is strenuous and very absorbing, but it does not necessarily cut the residents off wholly from their own home life and personal friends. Most of the settlements close for about two months in the summer, and holidays of course can be taken at any time. Nevertheless, if the work is to be properly carried on, there must be three or four workers besides the resident head-worker willing to devote the major part of their time and talents to the district. In the early days of settlements, it was suggested that a rota of ladies should be in residence each for a month at a time, but the drawbacks to the arrangement were soon realised. Now, though there is no hard-and-fast rule, the main work

is entrusted to ladies who live the greater part of the year at the settlement. But these can receive valuable help from others, who only come down once or twice a week, provided they come regularly. This, in London at least, where most people of leisure have no lack of pleasant engagements, requires some self-denial. But unless the work is going to be done regularly, unless the rule is made and kept, that no mere society engagement is ever to stand in the way, it had far better not be undertaken at all. Happily, a worker with the right spirit soon gets so absorbed in her girls or her "mothers," that the temptation to irregularity vanishes.

Such are the broad lines of settlement life, but as regards the actual form of work undertaken, there is no strict uniformity among them. Thus, in addition to the clubs and classes and mothers' meetings, which, with systematic district visiting, represent the normal sphere of activity, each settlement would seem to have developed some auxiliary feature of its own. For instance, Westminster is mainly a children's settlement, where the poorest of the children from the Westminster slums are taught, fed, amused, and refined. From five till eight the cheerful club rooms are thronged, and drill and sewing are judiciously sandwiched in between games and hot cocoa. At Tower Hill a boarding-house for homeless Catholic work-girls has been opened in Great Prescott Street,

and is found an invaluable adjunct to the ordinary parochial activities. At St Cecilia's, Commercial Road—a veritable hive of industry—the special feature is the scholarship classes which Lady Edmund Talbot has done so much to establish. Here, some hundred of the older school children, boys and girls, having first been regaled on bread and jam, are taught from five to seven every afternoon. It is a well-known fact that but few scholarships go to the schools in very poor districts, not that the poorer children are less intelligent, but because they are less well-fed and they enjoy no facilities for home-work. It is believed that these extra classes will open up the possibilities of County Council scholarships, with the very important benefits they confer, to numbers of our poor Irish children, who would not otherwise have a chance in competition with the more well-to-do children of the provided schools.

St Philip's, again, in the Mile-End Road, possesses, in its beautiful spacious old house and large garden, special qualifications for bringing joy and gladness into the lives of the poor. One is not surprised to learn of flourishing clubs and crowded mothers' meetings, or even of successful cookery and dress-making classes, difficult as it is to get club girls to devote their energies to anything save drill and dancing. Perhaps nowhere is the friendship between the people and the ladies so close and

personal as here—a friendship founded on fourteen years of daily intercourse. St Philip's is something more than a mere centre for work: it is a real Catholic home set down in the midst of East End squalor and poverty. Hence, more fully than elsewhere, we find realised the difficult ideal of the fusion of rich and poor, and one knows how vast a difference the coming of the ladies must have made in that drab, dreary neighbourhood of Mile-End, the sight of which, years ago, filled Cardinal Vaughan with depression at the almost hopeless conditions under which the work of the parish had to be carried on.

Parochial associations clearly possess fewer attractive features than settlements. They merely do whatever is done in any properly organised parish, though probably with rather more method. In several parishes, however, they have been instrumental in founding and conducting very successful clubs for girls. Clubs are so familiar a form of social work, and their utility is so widely recognised, that it would almost seem superfluous to write about them. And yet, as they are by no means invariably a success when started, it may be as well to suggest a few indispensable conditions. These practically resolve themselves into two: a good head-worker and adequate funds. Almost everything in a club depends upon the person in authority—her tact, her business capacity, her gift for influencing her girls and winning their confi-

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dence. An unsympathetic personality will empty a club in a fortnight. But even an ideal manager must have some command of money. It is impossible, so I am assured by the head of one of our most successful girls' clubs in London, to run a club on the cheap. It must have the use of large, cheerful premises; it must be well equipped with games, a piano and all necessities; it must have money to pay competent teachers for all the classes that are carried on, or, if these are provided by the County Council, it must be in a position to meet whatever requirements the local authority may insist on. Again, a flourishing club is one that can bring its members into touch with other outside agencies, through which their lives can be made brighter and healthier, such as the Girls' Country Holiday Fund, and drill and singing competitions, or by occasional visits to exhibitions, lectures, and what not. All these things require money; and it is just because an association like the Ladies of Charity is able to provide much that the over-burdened parish priest can seldom afford, that parochial associations have proved such a boon in many poor districts.

A good deal of discussion still turns on the question to what extent clubs, whether for boys or girls, should be educational in their aims. Speaking broadly, non-Catholic clubs are usually more definitely educational than our own. The reason, surely, is that they are usually less religious.

Everyone is more or less agreed that mere recreation, healthy and desirable as it is, scarcely provides an adequate aim for the labour and expense of running a club, that some more permanent and tangible result should be forthcoming. Non-Catholics seek it in progress in education ; we seek it in progress in religious faith and practice. In most cases, it will be found impossible to keep two ideals in an equal degree before young people with whom the worker is only in touch for three or four hours each week. And the Catholic worker who succeeds by much precept and influence in bringing her club or class regularly to Mass and the Sacraments, will be wise to accept with equanimity the fact that the club evenings are mainly devoted to amusement and that the members show no special enthusiasm for French or book-keeping. In truth, it matters comparatively little what the members actually achieve in educational accomplishments. What every club should inculcate is a higher standard of refinement and conduct than that which prevails where the streets and the music-halls supply the only available spheres of amusement. For Catholic young people this can best be attained by keeping them in willing subordination to Catholic influences. Happily, devotion to dancing in no way clashes with regularity at Sunday Mass, and a club I know of, where a mixed dance at discreet intervals



represents the height of enjoyment, turns up in edifying numbers for the monthly Communion, and sends a large contingent into retreat for the Whitsun bank-holiday.

There is another branch of parish work for which Ladies of Charity, both at settlements and elsewhere, have already shown some aptitude, and in which in the future they may not improbably be called upon to render important services: *i.e.*, in the religious instruction of Catholic children attending provided schools. Whatever the solution of the present educational crisis may be, it is certain that we cannot depend in the future, as we have done in the past, on the religious instruction of the children by the teachers of our elementary schools. Already a certain number of our schools in London have been given up from absolute lack of funds to maintain them at the requisite level of efficiency; others are quite inadequate in point of size for the child population of the parish. The fact, then, has to be faced, that a number of our Catholic children—a number yearly on the increase—are being educated, through no fault of their parents, in non-Catholic schools. How is their religious instruction to be carried on? How are they to be prepared for the Sacraments and kept regular at Sunday Mass? Obviously, a portion of this duty will fall on the lay-women of the parish, under the supervision of the clergy. What is being done here and there by individual workers

may have to be done systematically and on a large scale in every parish. Our existing Sunday-school system is admittedly quite inadequate to cope with the situation that may arise.

In Paris, where the need is of course far more urgent than here, the Archbishop can count on the regular services of some 3000 lady catechists, who between them instruct over 32,000 children.<sup>1</sup> I was told, too, on a recent visit, of the "Dames de Ste Clotilde," who number some 400, and conduct among them over 80 *patronages* in the poorer parts of Paris. They add far more definite religious teaching to their *patronage* work than we in England ever attempt to combine with our recreative clubs. Catechism classes are held both Thursdays and Sundays, and the children are divided into four classes, in each of which a specified course of instruction is followed, the teaching being given by the ladies, supplemented at times by the parish priest. I believe many of the catechists go through a course of private study, with a view to fitting themselves for this important duty. Certainly, some of these French ladies are admirable teachers. Some years ago I visited the *Œuvre de Popincourt*, a settlement on English lines in one of the slum quarters of Paris, and I heard the Marquise Costa de Beauregard, one of the founders of the *œuvre*, give catechetical instruction to a large roomful of

<sup>1</sup> *Initiatives Féminines*, by Max Turmann (1905), p. 257.

children in a manner that filled me with admiration and kept her pupils in rapt attention.

One cause of the comparative failure of our Sunday schools in the past has undoubtedly been the inferior quality of the teaching as compared with the trained teaching of the day-school. The modern child has no respect for an incompetent teacher, and means will have to be devised to make the catechism classes thoroughly attractive if they are to be a success. The work of course bristles with difficulties which only experience can solve. At several of the settlements, notably St Philip's, the experiment is being made of holding instruction classes between five and seven o'clock on most week-day evenings; but the children's minds are necessarily tired after their school work, and the lady teacher often has to go round her district and collect them herself before starting the class. On the other hand, Saturday is notoriously a bad day for getting hold of the older children, and Sunday does not supply enough time for regular teaching. It is obvious that all present arrangements are purely temporary, and when we know the conditions on which our schools can be maintained, the whole matter will have to be decided by ecclesiastical authority. But it will vastly facilitate the settlement if the bishops find to their hand even a small body of zealous and experienced lay-women, capable

of organising the classes on a sound educational basis. And it seems to me the Ladies of Charity might, if they would, supply the need.

It goes without saying that much of the work described in this chapter can be carried on by people who are not Ladies of Charity. But the association is established among us in London; it holds the field, and I think I have said enough to show that in our individual capacities we shall all increase our powers of usefulness by co-operating with our fellow-workers, instead of pursuing a career of isolation and independence.

## II. *The Catholic Women's League.*

"The philanthropic work of Catholic lay-women in England, in its present undeveloped and unorganised state, may be said to be a weak spot in our social fabric. There is a good deal of activity, much right aspiration, a little overlapping and more isolation. Existing associations and enterprises are usually individually in touch with some central spiritual authority, but quite out of touch with one another, and are often ignorant of one another's existence."

These are the words, written in *The Crucible* (September 1906), with which Miss Margaret Fletcher embarked on her peaceful campaign for the establishment among us of a Catholic Women's League. The model presented for imitation was the German "Frauenbund," a Catholic organisa-

tion which, in the last few years, has had no small share in promoting the remarkable change that has admittedly come over the position of women in Germany. The "Frauenbund" enjoys high ecclesiastical patronage, and holds a widely attended general assembly every year, and thanks to it Catholic women are being drawn into co-operation with one another, and are being thoroughly equipped for the larger part they are called upon to play in the national life. Courses of lectures have been organised, libraries formed, congresses held, information bureaux established, and a great impetus given to practical training for every kind of social service. That the "Frauenbund" is proving itself an instrument of progress as regards both religion and citizenship, no one can doubt. Miss Fletcher's ambition has been to transplant so valuable an organisation into our own social system, with such modifications as circumstances may require.

To-day the Catholic Women's League is a reality among us; it has held its first annual meeting; it has drawn up its definite constitutions and it has received Episcopal approval. It can already boast a membership of over five hundred, while a local branch has been established at Manchester under most favourable auspices. In brief it has survived at once the prophecies of opponents and the criticism of candid friends—a phase through which every new venture has to

pass, more especially where women are concerned. We may assume then that the Catholic Women's League has come to stay, and that it is one of the growing forces in Catholic social life in England. What, then, it will be asked, does the League do? Old-fashioned critics will reply that it merely talks, forgetting that talking is after all a necessary preliminary to concerted action. What it has done may be summed up as follows :

It has established a flourishing debating society in which questions of interest can be discussed from a Catholic stand-point, and where women can acquire the useful and graceful arts of expressing themselves clearly, of keeping their tempers in debate, and of taking the chair in orthodox fashion ; in a word, can learn to rid themselves of that *gaucherie* that afflicts every novice on being called upon to perform unaccustomed duties before onlookers.

A number of excellent lectures on social subjects—emigration, apprenticeship, trade-schools, and the like—have been given with a view to educating Catholic women to a more intellectual participation in all forms of social service. That they should at the same time be instructed and fortified in all that pertains to faith, was provided for by a long course of weekly lectures on the outlines of Scholastic Philosophy, given by Dr Aveling, D.D., during last winter, a course which attracted a gratifyingly large audience.

Besides these educational efforts, an information bureau has been opened at the permanent offices of the League (28 Ashley Place, Westminster). Here the honorary secretary, Miss Streeter, is to be found at the service of all who come, every morning in the week, save Saturday, from 11 o'clock till 1 o'clock. Queries on any subject may be addressed to her, applications made for advice, for information, for work paid or unpaid. The bureau is still in its infancy, while information is being tabulated along the lines suggested by the applications received, but in time this should undoubtedly develop into one of the most solid accomplishments of the League. To radiate knowledge, and at the same time to act as a connecting link between the scattered forces of Catholic philanthropic life, is an undertaking that requires much hard work. Yet this and no less is the task that the president and her council have set themselves to accomplish.

Thus, so far, education of women and co-operation among women have been the two corner-stones on which the League's work has been based. Its very existence seems to me a proof that a more progressive spirit is beginning to permeate the mass of Catholic women in this country, and that a proportion at least are eager to avail themselves of those wide possibilities of culture and activity that lie open to all of us in this country if only we use our opportunities aright.

In the dim future Miss Fletcher conceives of the League as a nucleus from which may spring a Catholic party among women, a party that shall represent all that is most thoughtful and responsible among Catholic womanhood, and which may be trusted to exercise a beneficent influence on our national life. Whether we share her faith in so vast a possibility or not, we must all, surely, pay our tribute to the generosity of the conception. The humble shilling which constitutes the annual subscription to the League will be grudged by no one, if it is regarded not only as conferring participation in certain tangible advantages of the moment, but possibly as opening the way towards that wider and fuller Catholic life in this country which must be the aim of all our ambitions.



## CHAPTER IV

### CO-OPERATION WITH NON-CATHOLICS

It is but a step from co-operation among ourselves to co-operation with others. In theory Catholics will often concede the one while denying the other, but in practice when once the attitude of exclusive individualism in matters philanthropic is abandoned, co-operation with outside agencies follows almost imperceptibly. A considerable change has come over our practice in this respect in the course of the last twenty years. It is true Cardinal Manning, with his sense of statesmanship and his eager advocacy of all causes of social reform, broke down the ring fence of exclusiveness with which, in his day, Catholic activity was hedged about, but many of us can remember the bitterness of the criticism he encountered in certain quarters for the leading part he took in the temperance crusade, in labour disputes, and above all in the social purity movement, and how the fact that Archbishop's House became a meeting-place for politicians and philanthropists

of every school of thought was regarded by old-fashioned Catholics as a matter rather for reproach than for congratulation. The example set by the great cardinal has none the less borne fruit, and many things that appeared temerarious then, would be accepted to-day as matters of course, so that we are almost tempted to forget how much we owe to his initiative. Even in purely philanthropic matters his influence opened doors that had hitherto been shut to Catholic interests. Before his day Catholic children had no religious rights, and if they participated in Protestant charities they did so on Protestant terms. It was, for instance, the Cardinal's friendship with the Rev. Benjamin Waugh and their common devotion to the cause of suffering childhood which laid the basis of the scrupulous fairness to Catholics which has always characterised the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, and which in its early days cost it both friends and money. It was the Cardinal, too, who laid down the exact terms on which Catholic schools were to participate, without danger to the children's faith, in the great benefits of the Children's Country Holiday Fund, and it is pleasant to know that the harmonious working of twenty years has never been broken by any sectarian differences. Societies such as these set a standard that smaller bodies feel bound to accept under pain of incurring a

charge of bigotry, and to-day there are few associations of any importance in London that do not take trouble to satisfy reasonable Catholic claims.

Co-operation properly understood, however, implies obligations as well as advantages, and should not mean that we get what we can out of undenominational societies and give next to nothing in return. I have so often heard complaints of the rarity of Catholic subscriptions even to societies that go out of their way to benefit the Catholic poor, that I fear we do not always fulfil our side of the bargain with becoming generosity. Catholics often join mixed committees in the first instance to watch over our special religious interests, but they should do their fair proportion of the general work of the society, and share in its financial responsibilities. Probably, however, the lack of Catholic workers makes itself even more felt than the absence of financial support. I rejoice to know that for many years past Catholic women have done valuable work on some of our best known charitable associations—the M.A.B.Y.S., the National Vigilance Association, the Charity Organisation Society, the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children, the Children's Country Holiday Fund, and others—but their number has been all too few. Many committees have had, and still have, great difficulty in securing adequate Catholic

representation. Naturally enough we devote our first energies to our own enterprises, but it is important that undenominational charities should participate in our benevolence, and that on occasions when there is a general rally of all the churches in some scheme of social betterment, the Catholic Church should not be conspicuous by her absence. People might help in this direction who do not feel drawn to definitely religious work. Their presence would be a guarantee that the society could safely be applied to for assistance in suitable Catholic cases, and would help to dissipate those remnants of anti-Papist intolerance, born of ignorance, which still linger here and there in our midst.

Apart, however, from purely philanthropic enterprises there is a tendency of the present day which should not be ignored, the tendency towards what has been aptly termed voluntary work in a municipal setting, *i.e.*, the laying down of a scheme of social work on broad lines by some administrative body, and the invitation to unpaid lay-workers to co-operate in carrying it out. The composition of the metropolitan distress committees under the Unemployed Act of 1905, and the feeding of school children through private or denominational agencies assisted by grants from the County Council are recent examples of this tendency, which in the opinion of many competent judges gives the best attainable social results. Through

it you get on the one hand publicity, official inspection, and presumably at least, a scheme in harmony with local requirements, and on the other you enlist the enthusiasm and individual initiative in which the salaried official is apt to be deficient. The most familiar example to Catholics of this combination are our own certified schools, entirely administered by our religious congregations on lines laid down by the Local Government Board or the Education Department, to which bodies such as Boards of Guardians are permitted to delegate the care of children chargeable to them. There is little doubt that these privately managed institutions, called into existence in response to an administrative appeal, are not only far superior to the ordinary poor-law school, which costs on an average twice as much per scholar, but that harassed as they have been at times by official requirements they are among the very best that the Catholic body in England has been able to produce.

The importance of this new tendency, warmly applauded by our younger school of social students, will be more fully appreciated when it is remembered that it is in direct contradiction to the idea so universally accepted some years ago, that private and public enterprise must be kept wholly apart. It has been, for instance, a favourite axiom with many philanthropists that poor-law and charity must never go hand in hand, that the

moment the poor-law intervenes, private charity is to vacate the field, a theory which has had no small share in perpetuating the evil of a permanent pauper class. Private enterprise in England has been singularly averse to any form of official recognition—in nothing does our national individualism show itself more markedly than in this—and even to-day we have nothing to correspond to the French *reconnu d'utilité publique*, a form of commendation, eagerly sought after by *œuvres*, which paves the way to a grant in aid from the municipality. Nevertheless it is precisely towards this “municipal setting” that we in England are gravitating. The days have gone by when a school or hospital won general approval by standing proudly outside any scheme of public recognition on the ground that it managed its own affairs in its own way. The best managed institutions now submit themselves gracefully to inspection, realising that public opinion demands that they should, nor are they above accepting either advice or contributions from any properly constituted official body.

The point of all this from a Catholic point of view is that a type of social worker is being evolved capable of filling semi-official positions, or at least positions recognised by more or less officially constituted bodies. School managers, hospital almoners, health visitors working in connection with sanitary inspectors, and co-opted mem-

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bers on education or distress committees—these are the posts that the modern worker among the poor aspires to fill. All of them require definite qualifications besides wide general experience. It is most important that when such appointments are made Catholics should not be passed over, that there should be among us a sufficiency of obviously suitable candidates for these unpaid posts of honour. I am afraid this has hardly been so in the past. Our religious congregations and our strictly religious work absorb much of our best voluntary material, and we are thus placed at a certain disadvantage. Moreover Catholics, and especially women, have taken until recently exceedingly little interest in the material progress and municipal good government of their parish, and the kind of posts to which I am referring can only be filled effectually by those who are in real sympathy with the reform movements in which they are asked to co-operate. Once again more training for social work and a less parochial view of our obligations are what we need if we are to labour on terms of equality with our non-Catholic fellow-workers in these new fields of social endeavour.

## CHAPTER V

### DISTRICT VISITORS, OLD AND NEW

It is a not uncommon occurrence when a novice at social work presents herself to a parish priest and asks vaguely but zealously for "something to do," that she should forthwith be allotted a street, or several streets, and thus find herself enrolled in the vast army of district visitors. In my humble opinion this is absolutely the last post that should be entrusted to a beginner. District visiting to be in any way effective and beneficial requires much tact, much knowledge of local circumstances, much experience in dealing with the poor. Done ineffectually and injudiciously it may be productive of untold mischief. True, the necessary qualifications may be acquired in the course of a year or two by an apt and sympathetic visitor. But what of the mistakes she has made meanwhile, the foolish advice she has intruded, the doles trustingly bestowed on the drunkard and the loafer? What have the poor done that they should be subjected to these well-meant but wholly amateurish efforts after their sanctification?



Perhaps the worst offender of all, as district visitor, is the rich Lady Bountiful who descends spasmodically upon a parish, scattering boots, blankets, soup-tickets, even money, without any adequate investigation, encouraging the thriftless while rousing the resentment of the self-respecting, and who, on discovering at length that her blankets are being pawned, and her doles spent on drink, and that the pathetic tales of misery poured into her willing ear are largely inventions, will retire from the scene in virtuous indignation, and declaim against the ingratitude of the poor, and the uselessness of attempting to improve their lot. Such an attitude is simply heart-breaking to those who have laboured long and patiently among their poorer friends, admiring their really heroic virtues, conscious of their special temptations, and fully alive to the responsibility of helping them to direct their lives.

The above is perhaps an extreme case ; it is the inefficiency of much district visiting that I am anxious to point out and the consequent waste both of human energy and means. In point of fact many Church visitors, whether Catholic or Protestant, are somewhat unpopular with the families they visit, and are only welcomed civilly partly in the hope of a dole, and partly from the proverbial patience of the poor under the minor inflictions of life. It is this promiscuous visiting that leads to so much promiscuous and unnecessary alms-

giving. Having walked in uninvited, the kind-hearted district visitor feels constrained to do something to justify her visit, and the gift of a coal-ticket supplies the easiest solution to a momentary awkwardness. And the Catholic visitor having passed through the street in the morning, the Church of England visitor will follow in the afternoon, and perchance the chapel Sunday-school visitor next day. And so the dribble of coal-tickets and shillings goes on.

Much of this would be prevented if the visitor had a definite and sufficient reason for her call. And if I am asked how a novice is to become familiar with "how the poor live," I should say, visit by all means, but only with some specific object, *i.e.*, to ask after a sick child, to collect the pence of a savings-club, to arrange children's country holidays, and so on. The visitor can then use her tact as to whether, her business briefly concluded, she will pass on with a friendly apology for having interrupted a busy woman, or whether, without intrusion, she can make the business the excuse for a longer visit, and so lay the basis for really friendly relations. We do not intrude ourselves uninvited at inconvenient hours on our well-to-do friends, and it is difficult to see why our poorer neighbours should be treated in their own houses with less courtesy. It is the tacit assumption of the Church visitor that she has a right to call when she pleases, and a right, too, to give advice

and administer rebukes, which so frequently renders her unwelcome. The mistake is often made of arguing that poor people have a quite different standard from well-to-do people, and need not consequently be treated with the same consideration. Rich and poor are undoubtedly different in some respects, but they are singularly alike in others, and I fancy women of every class resemble each other in resenting outside criticism of their domestic arrangements. Consequently advice, if proffered at all, should be insinuated with infinite tact, and only after friendly relations have been firmly established. For my own part I believe the indirect method of talking over the extreme difficulties of the situation with casual suggestions as to how other people have sometimes met them with success, is the safest alternative. The energetic young reformer who boldly informs her hostess that the room is shockingly stuffy, and that the family washing ought to have been done earlier in the week, however justified by facts, merely gets herself disliked and in most cases effects nothing.

If the ordinary district visitor is scarcely an unqualified success with the wives, she is even less so with the husbands. An Englishman, as a rule, is more independent than his wife, neither does he take kindly to outside interference in his domestic concerns. He has no great respect for the women of the upper classes, who appear to him, truly

enough, singularly ignorant of the most ordinary facts of life, rates of wages, conditions of labour, and the like. And if, as is not improbable, he is a radical or socialist in politics, he resents the system of small doles by which the allegiance of his household to Church and State is, in appearance at least, secured. He will generously abandon all these prejudices in favour of women workers of any class who, in his opinion, have proved their merit and hence won his confidence; but they must be endowed both with tact and knowledge in the first instance. The well-meant but misdirected energies of amateur philanthropists merely excite his scorn, and hence tend to intensify, instead of lessening, class cleavage.

The district visitor of the future, if she survives at all under that name, will hold, I hope, a far higher position in the estimation both of the poor themselves, and those who work among them. Though connected probably in the first instance with a Church, she will be in close touch with all the charitable agencies of the neighbourhood. She will give nothing herself, but will report to the proper quarter all the real needs she comes across. She will take special pains to dissociate the giving of alms from attendance at Mass, or the reception of the Sacraments, as few things tend so much to bring religion into disrepute. She will place freely at the disposal of the poor just that specialised knowledge that they always lack, and that in

time of sickness and trouble they need so sorely. The poor on their side will cease to look for doles at her approach, but will turn gratefully to her for advice, remembering the many services she has been able to render them. Moreover, our district visitor will become in a very real sense a health visitor, an ally on the one hand of the municipal authorities in their campaign against unsanitary conditions of life, and on the other having at her finger-tips for the benefit of the mothers all the most recent schemes for helping them to rear healthy children, such as "schools for mothers," infant consultations, dinners for pregnant women, and so on. In like manner they will take their share in the organised campaign against tuberculosis now at length being urged by doctors and medical officers of health, reporting rooms that require disinfection, preaching the gospel of the open window, recommending anæmic and threatened children for the new children's phthisis homes, pointing out where applications can be made with advantage to Boards of Guardians.

This is no fancy picture, for already in many parishes the new type of health visitor is gradually displacing the old-fashioned district visitor, and educated women are being drawn to a sphere of work which presents so many obvious opportunities for useful service. We have at length woken up in England to the terrible loss of human life involved in the malnutrition of infants, in the

overcrowding of tenement houses, and last but not least, in the scourge of tuberculosis. To-day, Borough Councils in London, and municipal authorities all over the country are devising and carrying out schemes for the reduction of the abnormal death-rate in many industrial districts. Working in co-operation with them we find doctors and philanthropists organising health societies for the diffusion of practical knowledge on the rearing of infants and the nursing of consumptive patients, and for the general improvement of the sanitary condition of the borough. On these committees it is most desirable that Church organisations of every denomination should be represented, for it is only through local workers that women can be reached in their own homes. Another important feature of the movement is the appointment of an ever-increasing number of women sanitary inspectors, whose duties are largely concerned with women and children and the sanitation of the home. It is to work in co-operation with these paid officials, to distribute leaflets of advice and see they are acted on, to explain to parents what is expected of them by the authorities, that the services of district visitors are so urgently needed. Just what can be accomplished on behalf of babies, by a well-thought-out scheme and zealous co-operators, can be studied in a fascinating little book, *A School for Mothers* (H. Marshall, 1s. net), describing the experiments and the aims of

the St Pancras Mothers and Infants Society. The possibilities it opens up should excite enthusiasm in every worker among the poor.

It is not necessary that a health visitor should be a trained nurse, still less that she should have medical qualifications, but it is highly desirable that she should possess some practical elementary knowledge concerning the management of children and sanitary laws and regulations. Some Health Societies organise special lectures from time to time for the benefit of their visitors and of parish workers generally. Where these are not available, women anxious to qualify for this most interesting work should apply to the National Health Society (53 Berners Street, Oxford Street), which employs experienced lecturers to give courses not only on the familiar First Aid, but also on the care and feeding of babies, and the precautions to take to prevent the spreading of tuberculosis. More important still is it that the health visitor should have the gift of winning the confidence of those she visits. Her work, unlike that of the paid inspector, is one of persuasion, not of compulsion; it means much patience, sometimes much drudgery in constant visiting, but if she has her reward in healthier homes, more robust babies, and a lowered death-rate, she will not grudge the labour involved.

Apart, however, from the important health question, a large number of the clergy of all

denominations are coming to realise the comparative futility of mere district visiting, unless it is made part of a carefully thought-out parochial scheme. A good many parishes now have properly constituted relief committees, which exercise a certain control over the relief expenditure, and establish helpful relations with other charitable bodies. Quite recently, too, a decisive effort has been made, thanks to the initiative of the Charity Organisation Society, to prevent the admitted evils of overlapping. This may be accomplished, either through a monthly meeting of the secretaries of all local relief committees to compare lists, or by the keeping of a register compiled from weekly relief lists of the whole district to which the secretaries of the various relief agencies would have access. Wherever either plan is in operation somewhat startling discoveries have been made concerning certain recipients of relief. It is satisfactory to know that parish priests and our various relief committees are falling into line with other organisations in this effort at mutual help. It has to be admitted that in some cases our Catholic poor are not above taking alms wherever they can get them, and having extracted what they can from the priest, turn their attention, if not to the parson, at least to the Protestant Bible-woman or the Church army visitor as the case may be. It is particularly difficult to prevent



this in the case of mixed marriages, each party applying for help to his own Church. There are too not infrequently cases where the assistance is pressed on our people for proselytising purposes. These facts all point to the urgent necessity for friendly intercommunication between charitable agencies, religious and lay, and to the substitution of systematic methods of relief to the haphazard generosity of the past. Otherwise we are tacitly encouraging petty deceptions on the one hand, and wasteful expenditure on the other. And from both causes religion suffers.

As a concrete example of the type of co-operative action between private philanthropists and public bodies at which we should aim, I would like to quote a case that came quite recently under my notice. A man with lung trouble—a Catholic—having discharged himself uncured from the workhouse infirmary, was reported to the local Health Committee for the prevention of the spread of tuberculosis. The health visitor promptly called, and found the man, his wife, and seven children living in two rooms, and supported only by the wife's earnings of ten shillings a week. Realising the hopelessness of such conditions, the health visitor reported the case to me as a Catholic guardian, and begged me to "do something." Knowing the difficulty of doing anything from the guardian's standpoint, the man having not only refused to remain in the infirmary, but to allow

his children to be sent to the Catholic certified schools, I reported the case to the Church relief committee, as one for charity. The Church committee decided to send the man to a convalescent home, if the guardians would take five children meanwhile, and if the man would consent to their going. Then the wife could continue to support herself and the two remaining children on her earnings. The point to observe is that such a solution was only arrived at by the harmonious co-operation of three wholly distinct organisations: the semi-official health visitor, who first discovered the urgent need of intervention, the Church, who came to the charitable assistance of one of her children, and the official Board of Guardians, which undertook to bear a portion of the heavy expense involved. No purely parochial committee, much less an unaided district visitor, could have coped unaided with so difficult and expensive a case.

## CHAPTER VI

### MOTHERS' MEETINGS

As a parish institution the mothers' meeting is of venerable antiquity and somewhat uncertain utility. Almost every parish, Catholic and Protestant, has its mothers' meeting, and by the aged female members of the congregation it is regarded more as a right than a privilege. In principle the gathering is intended to be a potent influence for good in the parish, a means of keeping the women steadfast in the discharge of their religious duties, and of raising their moral tone, while affording a little pleasant recreation as an interlude in their usually laborious lives. In practice these high aims are exceedingly difficult of attainment even where a satisfactory attendance is maintained. Too often the mothers' meeting jogs along in a somewhat monotonous routine, productive of few obvious results, while making no little demand on the time and zeal of its promoters. Managed without discretion, it may easily relapse into a mere parish gossip-shop.

A suitable meeting-place having been secured, the first problem to confront the organiser is the choice of a day and hour of meeting. Someone always has to be sacrificed. A great effort should be made to secure the attendance of the younger married women of the parish, even if they have to bring their babies with them. It is far more important for them to be kept in close touch with the Church, and to be able to profit by whatever advantages the meetings may offer, than for the old grandmothers of the district whose allegiance is assured and whose learning days are over. Their convenience consequently should be considered in fixing the day and hour: the husband's tea, the children's return from school, washing-day, evening services in the Church, and the women's own work will all have to be taken into account, and the line of least resistance followed.

How to employ and interest the women is the next problem to solve. It is a good plan to induce them to sew, but sewing is never very popular, and so inducements must be offered in the way of material at wholesale prices, or a periodical sale of the garments sewn at half-price. In either case the garments will probably have to be cut out and prepared for them. Even so, owing to the growing incapacity of English working-women to use their needles, sewing sometimes proves more trouble than it is worth.

If reading aloud is the custom, it is essential

to secure a good reader. It is useless to expect people to listen with attention to a disagreeable voice or a mumbling monotonous delivery, and unhappily good readers are rare. Just what to read always seems to me a difficulty. Short stories, sensational or sentimental, are usually enjoyed; but one would like to improve the occasion somewhat, and then discretion is needed if listlessness is not to ensue. Much of the popular literature that might otherwise be suitable is too Protestant in tone to be satisfactory, and in this dilemma one turns naturally to the admirable penny publications of the Catholic Truth Society (69 Southwark Bridge Road, S.E.). Even here, however, a wise discretion is necessary. It does not do to choose a story with too obvious a moral, as the personal application may be closer than is pleasant for the listeners. We none of us like to be preached at before our acquaintances. Again, the many excellent penny lives of Saints brought out by the Society are quite above the comprehension of the average mothers' meeting: Lady Amabel Kerr's *Lives*, intended for children, are far more suited to the purpose, while the simpler of their devotional publications, such as the penny Gospels, the penny *Life of Our Lord*, and all Mother Loyola's delightful volumes may be distributed with excellent results among the women during Lent or Advent. Quite recently I have thrown instruction to the winds, and have

entertained a mothers' meeting most successfully with *Mrs Wiggs of the Cabbage-patch*, and I intend experimenting with Louisa M. Alcott's *Little Women*. A long story, if not too long, is often helpful in maintaining a regular attendance.

In a general way, however, in managing a mothers' meeting, it is well to remember that people of limited education enjoy being talked to far more than being read to. The simplest little incidents told freshly and sympathetically amuse and arrest, and if in this way one can widen the sphere of their knowledge, and rouse their interest in events beyond their home circle, real good is done. One is often struck by their ready responsiveness to such appeals. It is a false modesty that makes so many workers decline to address gatherings of their humbler friends in this unconventional manner. A little courage and a desire to be helpful are all that is needed to overcome the first shyness. Sometimes it is a good plan to give short instructions on the approaching Feasts of the Church, such as the Purification, Holy Week, Corpus Christi, etc. ; but these must always be carefully prepared beforehand from reliable sources, and given in very simple language. Another excellent plan is to arrange for elementary lectures on domestic hygiene, the management of babies, children's ailments, etc. ; these are always popular with the mothers. It is, however, essential that the lectures should be delivered, if

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possible, by a trained nurse or lecturer, or failing that, by a really practical *mère de famille*, who can illustrate her teaching from her own home knowledge. For unmarried women of necessarily limited experience gained under domestic circumstances totally dissimilar to those of their hearers, to lecture working-women on the management of their husbands, their homes and their babies, is only to court failure and possibly to excite ridicule.

Most mothers' meetings try to inculcate thrift by instituting some sort of savings bank, into which weekly pence can be paid. Blankets, coals, boots, Christmas dinners, are all praiseworthy objects for which to save, the promoters arranging, of course, more favourable terms than could be obtained by the individual buyer. In London the Women's Country Holiday Fund is ready to co-operate with any mothers' meeting in sending away in the summer selected members who have paid up week by week the stipulated proportion of the expense, and there can be no more desirable consummation than that of securing a week's rest in the country for some of our overworked underfed women. For all these excellent purposes, and for marking the attendance, books and collecting-cards must of course be kept in a thoroughly business-like manner, and accounts scrupulously balanced. Indeed, the amount of small business matters to be attended to in connection with every flourishing mothers' meeting makes it essential

that at least two workers should be present at every gathering, otherwise the institution relapses into a mere business meeting, and the friendly personal intercourse, on which so much depends, tends to disappear.

It would seem that by some immemorial custom light refreshments, such as tea or coffee with cake, form an essential feature of every mothers' meeting. Sometimes this is given free, sometimes a penny is paid for it. The stern economist who sees demoralisation lurking in every free gift to the poor, would naturally prefer the latter arrangement, for it has been unkindly asserted that, with a little ingenuity, a respectable old woman can get her tea for nothing almost every day of the week, by presenting herself in turn at all the mothers' meetings and social chapel gatherings of her neighbourhood. The economist argues, with some plausibility, that any woman can pay a penny for her tea, but in point of fact, it is not so. With the bread-winner out of work, the careful mother would certainly hesitate at spending a penny on her own cup of tea, when she might share in the meagre family meal at no perceptible increase of expense. Hence she may keep away from the meeting, ashamed to come without her tea money and unable to afford it. For this reason, in very poor parishes, it is perhaps unwise to insist on a payment.

Custom further ordains that the mothers should



enjoy a tea-party every Christmas and a country "outing" every summer. This should suffice for regular entertainments. The meetings may of course be judiciously varied by a little music or an occasional magic-lantern, but it is a mistake to indulge in frequent entertainments with a view to keeping up attendances. Such methods degenerate into mere amiable bribery and usually defeat their own end, while they are utterly destructive of all religious influence.

Although it would appear that Catholic mothers' meetings are in their outward features less obviously religious gatherings than their Protestant counterpart, the strong underlying motive for holding them would always be a religious rather than a merely social one. Catholic workers will naturally make it their duty to encourage all the women to go regularly to the Sacraments, and where there is reason to believe that the Easter duties have been neglected, they will report the matter to the parish priest. Untold good may be effected by inducing the members to join in the short annual retreats, now organised for all classes of working people, to be described in another chapter. An annual gathering at the Westminster Cathedral of all the mothers' meetings of the Metropolis, as organised some two years ago and addressed by the Archbishop, would be immensely appreciated, and would go far towards animating the various meetings with a wholesome spirit. Everything

should be done to make the members realise the value of such a corporate act of worship, and I would like to see the women of every parish in London marched into the Cathedral behind their own banner. Everything is good that lifts them out of a narrow parochialism; much more is it good when they can be made to feel that in their numbers, as Catholic mothers, they are a moral power in the land, with responsibilities even beyond their own households. And the successful mothers' meeting is a first means towards this consummation.

## CHAPTER VII

### CHILDREN'S HOLIDAYS

To send city children into the country, to let them exchange, if only for a week or a day, the ugliness of the mean street for green meadows and the open common, is a form of philanthropy that appeals to each of us. I need say nothing to urge it. We in England cannot indeed rival the citizens of New York, who allow the ailing children of their slums to enjoy the sea-breezes in specially chartered steamers. We have not as yet advanced beyond brakes and *char-à-bancs* as means of conveyance, but none the less we do spend a great deal of money, time, and trouble in the effort to secure a summer holiday for as many town-dwellers as possible. Thanks to the haphazard fashion in which we love to conduct our affairs, it would seem probable that some children secure several holidays in the year and many enjoy none. Our first effort, therefore, should be to select our children wisely, our second to ensure that they do really see something of country life in its normal aspects,

and not as it may appear when invaded by a noisy thirsty throng, dumped down in some peaceful village by an excursion train. Margate beach on August bank-holiday is not the ideal towards which we wish our children's imaginations to yearn when holiday time comes round.

It may be inferred from the preceding paragraph that I regard the much advertised "day in the country," much more a "day by the sea," somewhat as a snare and a delusion. Frankly, I would at all times elect to give a small number of delicate children a fortnight's holiday, rather than take a whole school for a day's excursion. Where, however, single days in the country are an established custom, all that can be done is to keep the parties as small as possible, to select the quietest available spot for the excursion, and to see that a sufficient number of teachers and parish workers accompany the expedition and really devote themselves to the children's entertainment. With these precautions the drawbacks to a noisy exhausting day are at least minimised, and the children's happiness assured, although it remains a question whether the results justify the heavy expenditure entailed.

A fortnight's visit to a country cottage, on the contrary, is a benefit to an ailing child concerning which there can scarcely be two opinions. Various societies exist for this object, working on more or less similar lines, but by far the best

known and the most efficient is the Children's Country Holiday Fund (18 Buckingham Street, Strand). Its local committees cover the whole of London, and by its agency some 30,000 children are sent into the country every summer. If I take the achievements of the Fund as typical of country holiday work, it is not only because of the large scale on which its beneficent operations are conducted, and the very thorough system it has evolved, but because of its unfailingly friendly attitude towards our Catholic schools. The C.C.H.F. has not been satisfied with being what is usually termed undenominational, *i.e.*, with extending its benefits on equal terms to children of every creed, but it has made special arrangements to meet the wishes of Catholic parents. The conditions on which their children participate in the Fund—that they are to be sent in parties together as Catholics, and always to cottages within reach of a church—laid down in the first instance by Cardinal Manning, have been loyally observed ever since, and all our metropolitan schools owe a debt of gratitude to a Fund which, year after year, provides many hundreds of our poor children, free of expense to ourselves, with a fortnight in the country. Where our co-operation is needful, and should always be forthcoming, is as visitors to Catholic schools in connection with one of the London local committees, and as country correspondents for

Catholic centres in the country. Not to afford thus much aid to a Society that confers so much upon us would imply a lamentable lack of interest in the welfare of our children. Briefly, the work of a town visitor consists in selecting in concert with the teachers, the delicate children in the school allotted to her, ascertaining all the necessary facts concerning the family, filling in the forms supplied, and presenting the case to the committee for ratification. Then the parents' contributions have to be collected, medical examination arranged for, full instructions given as to clothes, date of departure, etc., and the parties of children seen off personally from the railway station. There are a good many forms to fill in and labels to write and regulations to observe, and one's duties keep one in town somewhat late in the summer; but it would be impossible to grudge the labour involved in view of the manifest appreciation of the children. One final duty should not be omitted, for it brings with it its own reward: that of meeting the holiday-makers on their return home. When one welcomes at the station an excited throng of rosy, sunburnt boys and girls, laden with bunches of dahlias, unwieldy vegetable marrows, bags of apples, jars of unripe blackberries and what not; when one drives back in brakes through the deserted London streets, listening to tales of what "the lady I stayed with" did and said; when one finally hands over

the youngsters to a cheering crowd of rapturous parents—one feels one can look back on a solid piece of work happily concluded.

The work of the country correspondent begins where that of the town worker ceases, and on her shoulders rests the responsibility of ensuring a happy holiday to the little people sent down to her. It is she who selects the cottages, meets the children and distributes them to their temporary homes. Her duties are somewhat arduous but full of interest to the child-lover, for she is the recipient of the naïve confidences of her little cockney visitors. We are all familiar with stories of the child, who, learning that milk was drawn from a cow, flatly declined to drink any until she could obtain it “from a nice clean can,” as at home; of the boy excited by the discovery that potatoes were dug out of the ground, and did not grow upon a bush; of the little girl’s surprise that houses could stand alone, and were not necessarily propped up by their neighbours. These, perhaps, are things of the past. Cheap excursion trains and object lessons at school have enabled even the poorest of our slum children to have some elementary conception of country life. None the less the children who clamour for shop windows after two days in a country hamlet, who know no games save those that can be played on the pavement of a court, and who are too terrified of their strange

surroundings to venture down a leafy lane, are still to be found in every party, and the making or marring of their holiday lies largely in the hands of the country correspondent. If she is wise she will, in the somewhat bewildering task of sorting out her twenty or forty children among the local cottagers, take note of the London correspondent's suggestions as to how the children are to be paired off. Much depends upon little friends being placed together, much, too, upon the discretion with which the children are apportioned among the cottagers, and for this local knowledge is absolutely essential. Some supervision is also necessary to ensure that the promised bedroom accommodation is really available at the moment, that relations on a visit are not in possession of the only spare room, or, worse still, that other children from some rival organisation have not been accepted for the identical period. Cottagers, as a rule, have no conscience as regards overcrowding, and being quite willing to "manage somehow" themselves, are rarely alive to the necessity of abiding by the society's regulations. On the other hand, the poorest parents from the most overcrowded slum home are apt to be *exigeants* concerning the country accommodation provided for their children. Thus it becomes imperative that, anyhow for the first day or two, the country visitor, or someone deputed by her, should devote some time to the little strangers



from town, that each cottage should be visited, that the boys should be shown where they may play cricket or fish for minnows, and the girls taken for walks, and encouraged to gather wild flowers, and warned as to what may or may not be done with impunity. A dozen London boys let loose in a village without occupation and without guidance—for the cottagers' authority does not usually extend beyond their garden gates—may easily make themselves a nuisance, and bring discredit on the whole movement. If a picnic can be organised, or tea in a friend's garden, or an expedition to some local object of interest, the joy will be great. The Catholic correspondent will, of course, also see that the children attend Mass on Sunday, or will take them herself if necessary. It is a good thing, when feasible, to arrange some plan for Sunday afternoons—otherwise, the cottagers naturally wishing for a peaceful Sabbath, the children are apt to be disposed of by being sent to the Protestant Sunday School. From all which it will appear that the office of country correspondent allows scope both for tact and energy.

Unhappily, even with the Children's Country Holiday Fund and various other agencies, both public and private, at work, it seems probable that only some 15 or 20 per cent. of the London children of school age enjoy a summer holiday in the country. The great majority are simply turned out into the

streets for the month of August, and, in the poorer districts, spend many hours of the sultry days literally in the gutter. What to do for these children is a problem which periodically perturbs the public conscience. One practical solution, at least, is that of the so-called holiday school, which owes its inception mainly to Mrs Humphry Ward. The idea is to keep the school building open with fresh teachers and a fresh curriculum, and by combining amusement with instruction, to attract children voluntarily from the street to the classroom. The experiment, where it has been tried, is said to have been an entire success. Indeed, it has even been suggested that the summer holidays in elementary schools should be extended to two or even three months, and that a holiday school should be run during that period at which attendance should be compulsory for a certain number of weeks. In this way the time of year during which both teachers and scholars could take their summer holiday would be extended, and a modified form of school would be available all through the season. There is much to be said in favour of the scheme, though it is too soon to express an absolute opinion concerning it. It is, however, quite probable that when more pressing educational problems have been solved, our school authorities may turn their attention to the best methods of making use of summer holidays. Merely to do

nothing for the child population of our great cities during the hottest summer weeks is coming to be regarded as a wholly inadequate policy, and social workers should be alive to the seriousness of the question. Here, as elsewhere, the special needs of our Catholic children will require safeguarding.

## CHAPTER VIII

### SHOULD MARRIED WOMEN WORK?

A PROBLEM of the moment, and one that threatens to become more acute as the labour market in industrial centres grows more overcrowded, is the work of married women. To what extent should wives be encouraged to earn, or allowed to earn? How can we reconcile what is often an apparent necessity to add to the family budget with the paramount claim of children to their mother's personal care? These are questions which the social worker cannot wholly shirk, and the answers to which should be based on some definite principle.

It is beyond dispute that the general tendency of the last fifty years has been to encourage all women, whether married or unmarried, to go out to work and to sacrifice the home life to the assumed necessity for wage-earning. To-day, happily, people are waking up to the serious national loss involved in our high infant mortality, and the work of mothers away from their homes

and the consequent premature weaning of infants have come to be recognised as grave contributory causes of a state of things that medical experts no less than civic authorities have denounced in the most vigorous language. Thus the question for Catholic social workers is whether we are going to acquiesce feebly in the old bad state of things, or whether we are not rather going to join forces with the doctors and medical officers of health and trained health visitors who are inaugurating this much-needed campaign of protest against our reckless waste of human life, and training young mothers to a fuller sense of their maternal duties.

Our responsibility is all the greater that the present condition of things is largely the result of the false teaching and misplaced encouragement given by social workers and others in authority. When I was first a guardian, some ten years ago, it was customary for the Relief Committee of the Board to expect women whose husbands had died, or who were away from home at the time of the confinement, to go back to work as soon as the baby was a fortnight old, sick relief being restricted to that period. Nobody enquired how the baby was to be fed during its mother's enforced absence. No one urged upon her her primary duty towards her new-born child. So, too, I have known babies born in the workhouse suddenly weaned at three or four weeks, in order that the unmarried mother

might be hurried back into service. No one troubled as to whether the unhappy infant survived this abrupt change of diet. These are the children that go to swell our infant mortality, or who, ill-nourished on unsuitable food, grow up rickety and undeveloped to be a burden upon the nation.

The wife of the working man, living with her husband under normal domestic conditions, scarcely fares any better. Should the man fall out of work, plenty of people—relieving-officers, district visitors, and others—will tell her that it is her duty to go out and earn, whereas in most cases the right thing would be to implore her to do nothing of the kind. A good deal of apparently praiseworthy social effort is openly aimed at facilitating the absence of married women from their homes. One of the stock arguments in favour of dinners for school children is that they allow the mothers to go to work for the whole day. That popular institution, the *crèche*, is another case in point. Too often, I am afraid, it is merely a convenience to women who prefer to go out to work, when they ought to be minding their own babies at home. Many of the much-advertised baby foods and the sterilised or humanised milk supplied at cost price by a benevolent municipality, are simply so many snares to tempt women to the neglect of their primary maternal duty and persuade them that a child will thrive just as well if deprived of its mother's milk. Thus it would be grossly unjust to

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attribute the high infant mortality in working-class districts mainly to the callousness and ignorance of the mothers. Rather it should be accounted for by the prevalence of a wrong standard, and, it must be added, by the bad example set by women of the upper classes among whom breast-fed babies are far rarer than in working-class homes.

At one time it was thought, especially among social workers on the Continent, that the chief evil to be guarded against was factory labour, and that home-work carried on by a woman at her own fire-side, surrounded by her children, presented but few drawbacks. Where home-work means dress-making for private customers in adequate premises, this is true enough. Unfortunately this covers but a very small fraction of home-work, and experience has proved that both from an economic and a hygienic point of view home-work presents greater evils than any other. It evades the factory laws, it escapes in great measure the supervision of the sanitary inspector, it is a direct incentive to child-labour, and it affords a happy hunting-ground for the sweater, who can beat down the wages of isolated home-workers in a way that women in a workshop would not tolerate. The condition of the female home-worker is now admitted to be more deplorable than that of any other class, and the claims of her ill-ventilated over-crowded room—kitchen, bedroom, and workshop all in one—

to rank as home in any true sense of the word are small indeed. Hence we find that Catholic social workers abroad are now devoting special efforts to the reduction, if not to the total abolition, of *le travail à domicile*, as being opposed to every right conception of healthy industrial life.

Children apart, there is still a serious aspect of married women's work which should not be overlooked. This is the tendency it has to transfer the permanent wage-earning of the family from the man to the woman. Every visitor among the poor must recall numerous families where the wife supports both husband and children. But instead of saying, as the visitor usually does say: "How lucky for the B.'s that Mrs B. has permanent work," she ought rather to say: "How unfortunate that Mrs B., by going out to work, should have encouraged her husband in habits of idleness." Not that the majority of men supported by their wives deliberately live in idleness, but competition in the labour market is so keen, and work often so difficult to get, that the daily necessity for providing bread and butter being once removed, they slip with fatal ease into a state of life in which they are content to do odd jobs when the landlord becomes particularly pressing for the arrears of rent. Low down in the social scale one finds a class of men who prefer a precarious existence on the 8s. or 10s. per week earned by their wives to the solid comforts procurable with 25s. a week which would



have to be earned by themselves. I can recall such a case, which went far to open my eyes as to the drawbacks to women's work. The wife was a milk-carrier and habitually supported the family. On one occasion she deliberately threw up her place, having realised that as long as she earned her husband would loaf. The family starved for three days, after which the man pulled himself together and obtained the work that for months past he had declared himself eager but unable to secure. Nor is the possibility of such an incident confined to the very poor, for somewhat higher in the social scale the women who keep their husbands form an even more numerous class. It would be instructive to see a return, were such a thing available, of all the dressmakers, milliners, shop-assistants, and female teachers who maintain their husbands wholly or in part. Indeed, only too often the competent woman-worker falls a prey to the loafer and the ne'er-do-well. When we reflect that in an appreciable number of households the woman performs the triple functions of wage-earner, child-bearer, and housekeeper, and this without tangible protest from public opinion, it is surely time that educated women realised the seriousness of an evil which in some measure at least they have helped to bring upon their poorer sisters.

Nowadays, when girls about to marry tell me, as they often do, that they intend keeping on their work after marriage, I warn them seriously of the

risks they run by doing so, and point out that their first duty is towards their homes and their husbands. The advice is never palatable, for girls in England are brought up in so undomesticated a fashion that a prospect of home and housework has no attractions for them, and the factory or workroom, besides its own excitements and pleasures, offers a welcome means of escape from irksome duties. One can point out to them further that, with the best intentions on their part, their homes, if they are away all day, must be more or less neglected and untidy, and that the consequent discomfort may prove a direct incentive to their husband to frequent the public-house. Sometimes an impression may be produced by demonstrating that even on the economic side these drawbacks are scarcely worth incurring unless the woman can earn really good wages. When it is remembered that a mother in constant work must necessarily buy her own and her children's clothes ready made, that she is often compelled to purchase ready-cooked food, and that she has to pay for her children under school age in the *crèche*, and give pennies to the school-children for their dinners—pennies too often wasted on ice-cream or sweets—that, in a word, she never has leisure for those discreet little economies which are half the secret of successful housekeeping on a small scale, it becomes obvious that a weekly wage of 6s. or 8s.—a fair average for the unskilled

worker—leaves an extremely small margin of real profit.

I am not suggesting that married women should never go out to work, or should be prohibited from doing so by Act of Parliament. I know too well the absolute necessity for their doing so in certain cases, but I do plead in favour of their work being regarded as a regrettable necessity rather than a normal arrangement, as the exception to be tolerated, not the rule to be approved. If it were generally condemned by educated opinion, a first step towards its gradual reduction would be achieved. It is in this direction that Catholic social workers might act in unison. The subject might be usefully ventilated in talks to a mothers' meeting, or a girls' club. And in formulating our protest, we as Catholics can take a higher line than that of mere expediency. Everywhere and at all times the Church preaches the sanctity of motherhood, the binding duty of parents to their children, and the need for the preservation of the home as the pivot of our social life. Catholic social workers abroad—in France, Belgium, and Germany—are, as a rule, far more alive than we are to the necessity of bringing their activities into line with the social teaching of the Church. On this point, we in England are apt to talk sentimentally and somewhat boastfully of the sanctity of our English homes, but we do singularly little to safeguard their sanctity. And even when the general neglect

of Christian teaching concerning the home has culminated in so serious a calamity as an abnormally high infant death-rate, we in England have not yet seen the necessity of combining in any effective agitation for reform. Catholic Lancashire has perhaps the worst record in the kingdom for infant mortality and for the prevalence of rickety children, and the reason is simply that women's work in the mills necessitates premature weaning. There are many babies in factory towns who do not even know their mothers by sight, for all their waking hours are spent at the *crèche*, to which they are hurried at early dawn, to be brought back asleep at night. Yet public opinion in the north, whether Catholic or Protestant, has come to accept the work of married women in factories as so entirely normal and inevitable, that, so far as I know, no effective Catholic protest has yet been made against a system condemned by the teaching of the Church and productive of such grave national evils. Clearly the problem of married women's work is one that we can no longer shirk with impunity.

## CHAPTER IX

### GIRL-MOTHERS

No one can visit for any length of time among the poor without becoming cognisant of women who are leading a bad life, or at least of unmarried girls with babies to support, and the problem of how to influence them for good is one of the most difficult the social worker has to face.

Of "rescue" work in the strict sense of the term, I do not propose to write. It should only be undertaken by women of wide experience and exceptional qualifications, and in no case by the beginner, whom this book is designed to help. By Catholics it is usually entrusted in great measure to the religious orders—the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, Poor Servants of the Mother of God, Sisters of the SS. Hearts of Jesus and Mary—who possess homes and refuges for penitents in all our large cities, and the safest plan is to do all work of this nature in co-operation with them. Most cases, and emphatically all those that are complicated by intemperance, can

only be benefited by placing them under voluntary restraint for a considerable period.

But besides the women deliberately leading an evil life, there are the more hopeful and more pathetic cases of girls who have fallen into trouble under promise of marriage, or with the man with whom they are "walking out," or again, under the many varying circumstances that point to ignorance and human frailty rather than to any deliberate choice of evil. Their wrongdoing, as a rule, is only revealed when it becomes apparent that they are about to be mothers. How are they to be helped? Where are they to be sent? In what proportion is reprobation of sin to be tempered by charity for the sinner? No work requires greater thought and patience and watchfulness than the befriending of these girls.

One must steer clear of two opposite dangers : over-severity, which excludes sympathy and therefore sterilises our efforts, and, on the other hand, anything approaching to sentimentality. We know that in Ireland these cases are treated both by the priests and by public opinion with the utmost rigour. The girl who has fallen into trouble may hear herself denounced by name from the pulpit, and may be driven from her home and even from the country. Such treatment helps to maintain Ireland's well-deserved reputation for purity of morals, and to keep down the illegitimate birth-rate, but there is a reverse side

to the picture. People filled with righteous indignation do not stop to enquire where the denounced girls go, how they get through the hard time before them, what is their ultimate fate. A great philanthropist, whose noble life's work entitles his words to the fullest respect—I mean the late Mgr. Nugent—was wont to speak in no measured terms of a severity that flung many an Irish girl, penniless and desperate, on the streets of Liverpool, from which he was the means of rescuing her. It is unhappily true that there is a lamentable proportion of Irish and Catholic women among the prostitutes of some of our great industrial cities, and those who, with the best intentions, would visit all lapses from virtue with the utmost rigour of social condemnation, should seriously ask themselves whether by imposing so heavy a penalty for a first offence, they are not driving young offenders to despair, and practically closing to them every door save those ever-open portals that lead to a life of ill-gotten affluence.

On the other hand, there is a danger nowadays, more real among non-Catholics than among ourselves, of excusing too much on grounds of heredity and environment, and showing sympathy in a way that is likely to weaken, instead of brace, the will of the person concerned. Woman's vanity often takes strange forms, and an unbalanced emotional nature will crave for notice

and notoriety on almost any terms. Hence an indiscreet sympathiser runs the risk of encouraging the recital of imaginary confidences and distorted versions of actual facts. My own experience is that very few women can be trusted to give a truthful account of how they fell into trouble, and therefore the less they are allowed to talk about it the better. For all these reasons much prudence and common-sense are necessary.

In the case of girls about to become mothers for the first time, a very great effort should be made to save them from entering the workhouse. In the workhouse wards they have to consort with a certain proportion of women of the worst character, and the demoralisation that is apt to ensue, combined with the extreme difficulty of making a satisfactory fresh start from there, more than counterbalances the salutary effect that the disgrace and strict discipline are supposed to exercise. Happily, in London, we are now provided with an admirable home for first cases, under the care of the Little Company of Mary.<sup>1</sup> Here the girls are looked after—at a very small cost in cases of real destitution—for the last few months previous to their confinement, and, what is equally important, they are received back into the home with their infants on their discharge from Queen Charlotte's Hospital, where all must go for

<sup>1</sup> Home of the Guardian Angels, 90 Charlotte Street, Fitzroy Square, W.



the birth of the child. Thus the possession of an in-patient's letter becomes a necessary qualification for admission to the home. The Sisters take great trouble to find suitable situations for their girls, and also to provide good foster-mothers for the babies, and every effort is made to keep in touch with inmates after they have left.

On the value of religious influences during this difficult period, it seems hardly necessary to dwell. The worker who has succeeded in placing her *protégée* with the "blue nuns" will rejoice and feel that the main part of her responsibility is at an end. A home on the lines of the Charlotte Street institution is needed in every large town where there is a considerable Catholic population. There yet remain the many Catholic girls for whom the lying-in wards of the workhouse offer the only available refuge. It is satisfactory to know that the Metropolitan Workhouses, with which alone I am familiar, possess, as a rule, excellently equipped maternity wards, attended by fully qualified midwives. Moreover, most Boards of Guardians have organised Committees of visiting ladies, whose primary duty is to advise and assist all girl-mothers who stand in need of help. These committees usually perform their duties in a most competent manner, and some include a Catholic Visitor specially entrusted with the Catholic cases. Where no Catholic representative is found, it is probable that none has volunteered for this

most needful work of charity. Here, as elsewhere, more workers are required.

There is one aspect of the girl-mother problem which is frequently overlooked even by those who have had wide experience in such matters—I mean, what may be termed the baby's rights. Too often they are sacrificed to the wage-earning necessities of the mother. I know all that is to be said on the other side; I shall be asked who is to maintain the baby if not its own mother; I shall be reminded that domestic service offers far greater moral security to women obviously in need of supervision than daily work. Nevertheless, I venture to think that public opinion ought to condemn rather than condone this taking of an infant, only two or three weeks old, from its mother's breast, in order to hand it over to the tender mercies of a foster-mother, who brings it up by hand in return for 5s. a week. The death-rate among illegitimate children is notoriously high. One reason, no doubt, is inadequate care and unskilled nursing, but another is, without question, the unnaturally early age at which these children are weaned. I know of a home—not a Catholic one—to which the girl-mothers are only readmitted from the hospital on condition that they do not bring their new-born baby with them. In other words, the infants are forcibly weaned on the tenth day after birth, and the mother never again has her

child with her. We are righteously shocked when a girl-mother deserts her child, and the law sends her to prison for doing so. Yet it is we ourselves who starve the germs of maternal love within her, by denying her all natural healthy companionship with her child, and condemning her to all the burden and none of the joys of motherhood. Is it likely she will love her child as she ought, work hard for it, keep good and steady for its sake, when she has never been able to do more than pay it surreptitious visits once or twice a month, and when, maybe, the child itself barely knows her by sight? There is a very wide moral question involved here to which workers should give full consideration. Something has been done in the right direction by S. Pelagia's Home, at Highgate, which takes in mothers and their babies, on condition of the former remaining for two years; something, too, by a similar home founded by the late Mgr. Nugent, at West Dingle, Liverpool. But we sadly need a home for a short period of from three to six months, to which many women would gladly come, who, not unnaturally, shrink from binding themselves down for a lengthy period. A few months spent with her baby, in the healthy moral atmosphere of a well-managed home, should be sufficient to fit the majority of "first cases" at least, for starting life afresh in good dispositions. And I would urge that special advantage be taken of these months

for imparting some thorough domestic training. Laundry-work, the staple occupation in homes of this class, is of singularly little use to the inmates in after-life. Few private households require laundry-maids, and work in a public laundry offers many temptations. On the other hand, the problem of how to secure a sufficient wage for the girl-mother to enable her wholly to support her child out of her earnings is a very real one. Many of these girls have never earned more than £12 or £14 a year as general servants, and they find themselves suddenly under the stern necessity of earning at least £18 or £20 a year, if they are both to keep themselves in clothes, and contribute the necessary 5s. a week for the support of their child. Few realise what a terrible struggle this entails. I feel strongly that if these incompetent, untrained domestics could only be given a good practical course of plain cookery, scientifically taught, they might be spared years of ineffectual misery and hardship. A knowledge of cookery would add at least £5 a year on to their domestic value, and the problem, on its economic side would, in many instances, be straightway solved. A small home on these lines has, within the last few months, been started at Brondesbury by the ladies who visit the lying-in wards of the St Marylebone Workhouse, from which the girl-mothers with their babies are transferred. The home is available both for Protestant and Catholic girls,

but if it prove a success, as I believe it will, I trust it may point the way towards a similar institution under wholly Catholic management.

It is the want of training, with the consequent incapacity to keep situations or earn an adequate wage, that results in so many women, burdened with a child, drifting down into the dismal ranks of "ins and outs" of our workhouses, maintained largely at public expense, and losing by degrees all self-respect and all capacity for honest labour. To step in and save women from such a fate, to afford just the material help and religious influence which will enable girls who have taken one false step to retrieve their position and return as quickly as may be to the ranks of the respectable self-supporting wage-earner, is the aim that all of us should keep in view when we offer a helping hand to women in their greatest need.

## CHAPTER X

### A FEW POOR-LAW PROBLEMS

THE poor law is so vast and complicated a subject, that it is a difficult task to condense into the space of a single chapter any adequate summary even of those points on which social workers are wont to require some enlightenment. Not only is the law itself extremely complex, but a very wide discretion is conferred on the elected guardians of the poor, with the result that great variations exist in the administration of different unions. Nor do the various boards seek to arrive at any uniform practice among themselves: on the contrary, they are fond of asserting their independence, and the fact that Paddington acts in one way would almost seem to be a reason why St Marylebone should act in another. More than this: boards frequently arrive at a decision more on impulse than on principle, and their actions are largely dependent on the presence or absence of individual members on any given occasion. Hence a coherent, logical policy in poor-law administration would appear to

be a boon passed praying for, and to lay down the law as to what guardians will or will not do under given circumstances is usually to court disaster.

After this introduction, no one will accuse me, I hope, of minimising the difficulty of acquiring any practical familiarity with poor-law matters, and yet, in the face of all these hindrances, I feel strongly that philanthropic workers should take more trouble than they usually do to acquaint themselves at least with the practice of their own parish authorities. It is of course notorious that as rate-payers hardly anyone takes an effectual interest in the subject, but it has very special claims on our attention both as Catholics and as social students. The poor law touches the life of the working-classes at so many points, that it is impossible to give one's humbler friends helpful advice in times of distress, unless one is cognisant of local methods of relief. Where the future of Catholic children is concerned, an accurate understanding of the position is in the highest degree necessary lest indiscreet advice should result in loss of faith. We should know both what dangers to guard against and what rights to insist upon. As things are, not a little trouble is given both to guardians and officials by the well-meant but highly injudicious advice given to poor people in need of assistance by district visitors and others, advice which often results in an unpleasant rebuff to their *protégés*. This is specially true in

reference to applicants for out-relief, the administration of which undoubtedly presents many perplexing features to the uninitiated. Many a time have I been distressed by applicants sent by some lady coming before the relief committee under circumstances which should have made a refusal of relief a foregone conclusion to anyone not wholly ignorant of ordinary poor-law procedure, and have seen them sent away sorely disappointed at a reception very different from what they had been unwisely led to expect.

The most effectual way of serving the poor in a responsible manner is undoubtedly to become a poor-law guardian, for which a residential qualification is all that is necessary. There are not nearly sufficient Catholic guardians at the present time. The numbers for the whole of England are about five hundred, of whom some forty sit on metropolitan boards. Many large unions with a considerable Irish Catholic population are wholly without Catholic representation. In others a solitary Catholic member may have a very uphill fight. For myself—after ten years experience—I can honestly say that the work of a guardian, harassing and discouraging as it often is, does nevertheless offer a very fruitful field for one's religious and civic energies. From the point of view of the social worker one has the satisfaction of getting, so to speak, to the bottom of things. One attains to an understanding of the conditions



under which the very poor live hardly to be arrived at in any other way. One masters by degrees the intricacies of law which elude all but the most persistent student. One strives with varying success to guide the administration of a great department on to lines that one believes to be sound and helpful. And if one can do much in one's public capacity to help those in need, one can do still more privately, fortified by one's official knowledge of the actual circumstances. There is no limit to the time that a poor-law guardian may not profitably spend over his—or her—duties. Women-guardians especially find endless scope for their activities in following up cases of women and girls who drift into the workhouse and starting them afresh in life. It is often a hard and arduous task, but one enjoys enough successes to make it infinitely worth while. It is no exaggeration to say that unless a certain amount of leisure can be devoted to poor-law work, it is futile to embark upon it at all. The guardian who merely attends the board meetings is of very little use. The real work, as in all departments of public administration, is done in committee, and unless a member is able to attend at least one or two important committees regularly he never arrives at any thorough grasp of the duties he has volunteered to perform. Moreover, personal influence is largely a matter of constant attendance, and contentious questions are often settled, not, alas, on their abstract merits,

but on a system of give and take between members. It follows that a guardian whom his fellow-members have reasons for propitiating can often win a favourable vote even for an unpopular resolution. Diplomacy and hard work succeed where logic and argument are doomed to failure. This is specially true of all matters touching on religion. Catholics are almost always in a small minority, and can only carry their proposals by the good-will of their colleagues. It is the industrious, all-round member who usually makes the most successful Catholic guardian. He will know how to pilot some contentious proposal through committee in such a guise that an unsuspecting board will agree to it without discussion. It must be remembered that even a victory may prove dearly bought when it has entailed an acrimonious religious debate.

I have already said enough to show how needful is the presence of Catholic guardians. It is reassuring to know, however, that in the metropolis, at any rate, there is scarcely any religious bigotry officially expressed. Nearly all our big London workhouses have a separate Catholic chapel for the use of the inmates, a paid Catholic chaplain, recognised Catholic visitors, sometimes even separate wards for Catholic inmates, while the children are invariably sent to our certified schools, and paid for at the full rate of 7s. a week. A newly elected Catholic guardian

is usually met with the assurance, genuinely uttered, that his co-religionists enjoy every spiritual privilege to which they are entitled. Yet the Catholic guardian is rare who does not find plenty to do in safeguarding Catholic interests. Bigotry often lurks in hidden corners, even where openly repudiated, and unless someone is on the spot to see that all Catholic children are correctly entered in the creed register and duly sent to our schools, that no hindrances are put in the way of inmates getting to Mass and the Sacraments, that Catholic burial is accorded to the Catholic poor, and so on, it may be taken for granted that mistakes will occur. Sometimes there is genuine uncertainty as to the faith of some fresh arrival, and officials are apt to act on the rule, "When in doubt enter Church of England," unless someone makes it his business to insist on careful enquiries. I remember five orphan children with an Italian name being passed to our workhouse as Protestants. I insisted on an investigation, with the result that it was discovered, as I anticipated, that the father had been a Catholic, and the children were all transferred to our certified schools. After all, it is the plain duty of Catholics to see that their poorer co-religionists do enjoy all the liberty of conscience that the law freely concedes to them, and we have no right to complain that others do not act fairly towards them, if we ourselves are too indifferent to exert

ourselves on their behalf. It is easy to see how much the presence of a Catholic guardian on the board will strengthen the hands and facilitate the work of the Catholic chaplain or "religious instructor" as he is officially styled, with whom, of course, the guardian should work in complete harmony. As for the Catholic inmates, they thoroughly appreciate any efforts one may make in their interests. They often have to submit to petty persecution because of their faith and their nationality, and sometimes they are apt to imagine slights where none are intended; but whether their grievances be real or imaginary, to have on the board a representative whom they can regard as specially their own, who fights their battles for them, and is occasionally present with them at Mass or Benediction, is a source of deep gratification. Indeed, with a generosity that is typical of the Irish people, they are ready to give one credit for far more than one is able to perform.

Perhaps the most fertile source of religious controversy on boards of guardians is mixed marriages, and the difficulty of deciding in what faith the children are to be educated. By law, all children chargeable to the parish must follow the religion of their father, or, perhaps it would be more correct to say, must be brought up in the form of Christianity their father selects, the mother having no legal rights in the matter whatever. The rule perhaps is as good a working rule

as any other, and we gain at least as many children by it as we lose—only, from our point of view, it is impossible to lose any baptised Catholic child with equanimity. As we know, many Protestant men, in accordance with their pre-matrimonial promise, freely consent to the Catholic baptism and education of their children. Yet if the man dies, and the children enter the workhouse, the law ordains that they shall be sent to the Church of England schools. Many boards act strictly in accordance with the law, though a few will stretch a point where the intention of the father is clearly expressed by the upbringing of his children, but this can only be secured by a friendly understanding. Sometimes the best solution is to grant out-relief to the Catholic widow and allow her children to remain with her, but many boards refuse on principle to allow any out-relief to widows. Yet another possible solution is provided by the curious anomaly that poor-law children are entitled to choose their own religion at the age of twelve! In my own experience as guardian I have known several Catholic children state their faith clearly to a committee, and ask to be sent to a Catholic school, and this, for a child of twelve, settles the matter. Where the Protestant father enters the workhouse or infirmary and brings his children in with him, it rests with him to request the guardians to send them to our certified schools, and if he takes the initiative

in the matter, very few boards would refuse his request. The Local Government Board, if appealed to, will always support the ascertained wishes of the father; the worst difficulty occurs where the father is dead or has disappeared and no absolutely incontrovertible evidence as to his wishes is forthcoming.

It may also happen that the Protestant widow of a Catholic husband may conceal the fact of her husband's faith, or may persuade the guardians to allow her wishes concerning her children to prevail over those of her dead husband. Sometimes even a bigoted board will deliberately arrange for Catholic children to be adopted by Protestant foster-parents, or will board them out where they cannot possibly attend Mass, or place them in a "scattered home" under a Protestant matron. All these possibilities which mean loss of faith to a baptised Catholic child have to be guarded against and are a source of ceaseless anxiety to a conscientious Catholic guardian. But I have surely said enough to show how needful it is that priests and social workers should familiarise themselves both with the law and with the practice of the local authorities, and where there is any real danger to the faith of orphan or destitute children, should arrange, where possible, for their admission to a diocesan rescue home. It is not always as easy as might be supposed, to take children out of the

workhouse when once they are in, and I have known every possible obstacle put in the way by the guardians in cases where it was known that the motive was a religious one. Sometimes even such cases have to be fought out at great expense in the law-courts.

Another department in which Catholic guardians can do good service, is by securing that all delicate or afflicted Catholic children should be sent to the certified Catholic schools or homes specially organised for them. It is pleasant to be able to state that—thanks largely to the religious orders—we are now singularly well-provided with homes and schools for every class of afflicted child—ophthalmic, ringworm, feeble-minded, epileptic, tuberculous, crippled, and what not. Such cases require treatment for months, or even years, and it is obviously of the highest importance that our young people should be sent to our own and not to similar non-Catholic institutions, however admirable. Guardians as a rule are delighted with our homes when they have the opportunity of inspecting them, and are perfectly willing to send our children to them, but it needs some one on the spot to suggest the suitable place at the right moment.

As regards the inmates of workhouses and infirmaries, whether young or old, the guardians are bound by law to provide them with ordinary facilities for the practice of their religion. Most

metropolitan boards, as I have already said, provide Catholic chapels and paid chaplains, and this of course is the ideal arrangement. Where the inmates have permission to go out to Mass, difficulties often arise through the privilege being abused, both by unsatisfactory Catholics and by certain Protestants, who will deliberately enter themselves as Catholics in order to enjoy a Sunday morning outing. I am anything but an enthusiast for workhouses as at present organised, and it is to me one of the most lamentable features of life in England, that hitherto no refuge save the workhouse has been available for the bulk of the labouring-classes when they attain to old age. Yet from the religious point of view there is this one consoling feature, that in well-administered workhouses many indifferent Catholics return to the regular practice of their faith, and many lapsed members are reconciled to the Church. I wish it were more widely realised than it is how fruitful a field of spiritual labour a workhouse may be, if undertaken by the right persons in the right spirit. Men can be got hold of there with whom the parish priest finds it impossible to come in contact. Given equal facilities, the level of churchgoing among the Roman Catholic inmates of a workhouse will be found to be incomparably higher than among their non-Catholic companions. Indeed it is among Catholics alone of that class that any under-



standing of the duty of worship seems to have survived. They undoubtedly appreciate whatever is done for their spiritual welfare, and I have known ninety-five per cent. of the Catholics in a large London workhouse go to their Easter duties. Such a result is surely worth striving for.

On rural boards, and even on the boards of many of our large provincial towns, the position is often very different from in London. Very few boards indeed, outside the metropolis, grant all the privileges to which Catholics are entitled. Thus scarcely any of the big workhouses in Lancashire, where Catholics, if anywhere, should be in a position to insist on their rights, provide Catholic chapels, and Mass has to be celebrated in the dining-hall amid odours of stale food. Of course, under such circumstances reservation of the Blessed Sacrament, a privilege so highly appreciated by the old people, becomes an impossibility, and Benediction out of the question. Many boards refuse to pay the chaplain any salary; others pay a derisory sum for children in our certified schools, and some, alas, still refuse on one plea or another to send our children to Catholic schools at all. One cannot but think that Catholic guardians, where they exist, have not always made so stalwart a fight for these essentials as they might. In other unions this condition of affairs testifies once again to the urgent need for more effectual Catholic activity in local elections.

The responsibilities of the Catholic guardian, when elected, are much lightened for him by the existence of the Catholic Guardians Association. This excellent organisation, of which Mr T. G. King (8 Cavour Street, Walworth, S.E.) is the honorary secretary and moving spirit, is prepared to give practical advice to its members on any difficult point that may arise. Mr King has an unrivalled acquaintance, not only with the intricacies of the poor law, but also with the ways of the Local Government Board ; he is in touch with guardians all over the country, and has done more than anyone to promote a more generous recognition of Catholic rights by poor-law officials. I would urge every new Catholic guardian to join the association (minimum subscription 2s. 6d. per annum), and consult Mr King at the outset whenever a knotty problem presents itself. The Association also organises helpful conferences, which take place either in London or in one of our large provincial Catholic centres, and the papers read on these occasions and reprinted in the annual reports will be found full of valuable information. Thus a Catholic guardian, even should he be the sole representative of the Church on his board, need not feel himself to be a solitary unassisted unit, but rather a member of a well-organised and well-instructed body of social workers with whom he has regular opportunities for exchanging ideas and experiences.

I have purposely refrained from discussing the many questions of general policy on which guardians hold very opposite views, such as out-relief, labour-tests and classification, partly because they are beyond the scope of this volume, and partly because at the present juncture such discussion would be somewhat futile. We are promised for the near future a wide scheme of poor-law reform, which I, for one, shall heartily welcome. In all likelihood guardians, as such, will be abolished, many boards unhappily having shown themselves both corrupt and incompetent in financial matters. It is abundantly clear to those who have studied the situation closely, that our present system does tend to perpetuate a permanent class of paupers, born, reared, and supported in poor-law institutions. It is not an unheard-of thing for three generations of one family to be simultaneously in the workhouse. We have to face the fact that our workhouse system is in no sense educative, and it is fast ceasing to be deterrent. Our urban workhouses are overcrowded with able-bodied men and women. To-day the trend of opinion is in favour of a breaking up of the whole system, and the portioning out of its functions among other administrative bodies: the infirmaries, in London at least, to a reconstituted Metropolitan Asylums Board, the pauper schools to the educational authorities, and the workhouses proper to the borough or municipal

councils. Tramp and casual wards will probably be wiped out of existence and replaced by real labour colonies. But whatever the solution proposed for this most difficult problem, pauperism in some measure will remain among us, and the same need will exist for disinterested and intelligent administration by educated men and women. Indeed the period of transition and reform will be one demanding much careful watching if the religious rights of our poor are to be safeguarded. If once the theories that now prevail in the educational sphere—that no parent is entitled to have his child educated in his own religious creed at the public expense—force an entry within workhouse walls, we run the risk of losing all that Cardinal Manning was the first to secure for the Catholic children of England. Therefore practical knowledge of, and keen interest in poor-law questions are more needed to-day among Catholics than ever before, else, in the settlement to come we shall find ourselves helpless and disregarded.

## CHAPTER XI

### WORK IN THE HOP-GARDENS

ONE of the recurrent problems of our day is how to keep in touch with the very poor, with the numerous body of unskilled labourers and their families, who in great measure escape the eye and the influence of the most zealous of parish priests. Every priest knows that below the level of those who come fairly regularly to Mass and the Sacraments, and whose children attend the Catholic schools, there are numbers more whom he never sees, families who are here to-day and gone to-morrow, sometimes in and out of the workhouse, or even in and out of prison, the temporary tenants of condemned houses where rent is not exacted, or of furnished rooms just so long as they can produce a daily shilling for rent. How are these people to be reached, civilised, influenced for good, brought into contact with Christian life and Christian worship? It is a problem that the Anglicans have to face as well as ourselves, and that the Salvation Army has made valiant efforts

to solve through its shelters and "slum-workers." Much is attempted on all sides for this more or less "submerged tenth," and sometimes with an apparent measure of success, but in the end it frequently becomes obvious that the very people one has been most anxious to get hold of are the very ones who have slipped through the meshes of the net flung out for their capture. Then a fresh scheme has to be devised.

For Catholic priests the difficulties of the problem are intensified by the fact that these non-practising Catholics have become more or less absorbed in the surrounding non-churchgoing population. How are they to be discovered in the first instance? A house-to-house visitation will often reveal their presence, but this first step has to be followed up, if it is to lead to any result. It has sometimes been proposed that some extra-parochial organisation should be entrusted with this duty. More than once the appropriateness of a Franciscan mission to these poorest and most needy members of the Church of Christ has been pointed out, but it was not easy to suggest just how such a work should be inaugurated. To-day, a beginning has been made in a small way, and, as often happens in such matters, it has come into existence, not deliberately with a carefully thought out scheme of reform, but evolving itself almost spontaneously out of a good work started with a separate though similar object. In it we have at

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least the framework of an organisation, extra-parochial and very elastic, which promises many elements of success in dealing with the very class of slum dwellers who, so far, have evaded all the efforts made for their spiritual regeneration. I refer to the Capuchin mission to the Kentish hop-pickers, which has attracted no little attention during the last year or two.

The spiritual destitution of the hoppers—of whom at least 10,000 are reckoned as Catholics—had long been recognised, and was verified by Bishop Amigo himself in the first visit he paid to the hop-gardens in September 1904. The result was an appeal to the Capuchin friars of the diocese to undertake missionary labours throughout the district, an appeal which met with a ready response. Three Septembers have passed since then, and the Franciscan mission to the hop-pickers may now be said to have taken permanent shape; for last winter, for the first time, it became possible to pursue the apostolate inaugurated in friendly chat across the bins in the hop-fields of Kent, into the slum homes of the pickers in their own parishes in East and South London.

Thus the enterprise divides itself naturally into two parts: active service in the hop-gardens in September, and house-to-house visiting in some of the poorest districts of London during the winter months. Workers and money are urgently needed for both parts.

It may reassure timid well-wishers to be told that hop-pickers are not all tramps and vagabonds, nor invariably members of the "submerged tenth." There are many grades to be found among them, from the winter occupants of the casual wards, and the "ins and outs" from the workhouse, up to the respectable working man who goes hopping for three weeks in order to provide his family and himself with a cheap and healthy holiday. Roughly speaking, the pickers may be divided into a decent set of poor and unskilled labourers, male and female, who go regularly year after year to the same farm, and a large army of more or less undesirable vagrants, who tramp down into Kent on the chance of a few days employment when the short season is at its height. It is they who have given the hop-fields their bad name, and it is they who form the difficult element to deal with. Yet all who have had personal experience of them will agree that the hoppers on the whole have been a maligned set of people. True, they are hilarious and addicted to drink and bad language, but they are hardworking, marvellously patient under extreme discomfort, thoroughly sociable, and quickly responsive to kindness. One must remember that to them the hopping season affords the one country holiday of the year, when it is useless to expect of them extreme propriety of conduct or a very serious attitude towards life in general.

From this preamble it may be inferred that no



one should volunteer for active service unless inspired by a very real love of work among the poor. It requires much tact and much energy, unfailing cheerfulness, and no small power of adaptability. The work is under the entire control of Father Cuthbert, O.S.F.C. (Franciscan Monastery, Crawley, Sussex), and nothing can be undertaken without his sanction. There is a priest at each centre where Catholics are known to be numerous, and two or three laymen and women living in lodgings and working under his direction. The primary object of the whole mission is to get the pickers to Mass on Sundays at the various tents erected for the purpose at convenient points. Each priest celebrates two Masses each Sunday; the laymen act as scouts, hunting up the people and bringing them in; the laywomen prepare the altars and the vestments, look after the women and children, and, where possible, lead the singing. Sunday afternoons are devoted to the children, who swarm in every camp and have to be partly instructed, partly amused, and generally kept out of mischief. On Sunday evenings concerts are sometimes organised and the opportunity used by the priest for a few earnest words to the audiences that music will always attract.

The week-day work all converges upon the Sunday Mass. The big hop-gardens are thoroughly canvassed from end to end while the pickers are at work, the names and home

addresses of all Catholics taken down, and information given as to the services. These chats over the bins provide excellent opportunities for making friends and acquiring information. When the weather is wet—and it may be very wet in September—the same process has to be repeated round the tents and hop-houses where the pickers are lodged. The Mass-tent usually serves as a centre for social gatherings during the week. Where a trained nurse is attached to the mission, it is there she attends to her patients, morning and evening. There, too, sing-songs—free-and-easy concerts organised by the people themselves—are held two or three times a week, or the children are entertained with a magic lantern. Workers of either sex with musical talents are in great request. Yet all this is not an end in itself, but a means of reaching the souls of men. The work in the hop-fields is carried on under Franciscan auspices, and it is intended that it should be done in a Franciscan spirit. The Hon. Violet Gibson put the matter very truly and very charmingly, when she wrote in the *Crucible* (June 1907):

“The hop-picker is very sensitive to and contemptuous of patronage; he will readily accept money if offered (a thing wisely forbidden by the mission rules), but he is not moved by it to any human feeling. But to the Franciscan sense of fellowship with the very poor he readily responds.

You must approach him as a comrade, and let him feel that your heart, and not your purse, is with him; when he calls you 'sister,' your ambition is reached."

The truth is, until recent years the hop-pickers were left almost wholly to themselves, a banned class, housed under conditions of shocking promiscuity, and almost incredible overcrowding, and tolerated only by the resident population as a temporary and inevitable infliction. To-day hop-growers, sanitary officials, temperance workers, and missionaries of all denominations vie with one another in improving the hygienic and moral condition under which the hop-harvest is gathered in, and it remains to be seen how thorough a reform may not be effected.

Already it has been proved beyond dispute by our Catholic workers that the mere fact of their going about day after day, in constant friendly intercourse with the pickers, exercises a civilising, restraining influence upon them. They are ashamed to be seen drunk, or heard to use bad language, by the priest and the "mission-ladies." The result of the three weeks' hard work is best tested on the day when the camps break up, and the long procession of family groups, laden with promiscuous household possessions, tramps down to the nearest railway station. This is the moment of the hoppers' temptation and the workers' opportunity. In past years it has often

been the scene of lamentable drunkenness and rowdiness, when the earnings of the season have been squandered or lost in a few hours. It is the wise rule of the mission that all the workers should be present at the departure of the "hopper-trains," saying good-bye to friends, giving last words of advice, smoothing down incipient quarrels, interposing tactfully between the neighbouring public-house and the tired, thirsty picker, helping children and invalids in the wild rush for seats that takes place when at length the long train of third-class carriages is shunted into the station. It is an exhausting occasion, for hopper-trains are frequently three hours late in starting, but when, as last September, the workers with previous experience were able to testify to a marked decrease in drunkenness and disorder, who would grudge the fatigue involved?

It can readily be understood that the more thoroughly the work is done down in Kent, the more impossible it becomes to allow the whole organisation to lie dormant for the ensuing eleven months. At first it was assumed that all that was needful was to report cases of lapsed Catholics to their parish priest, and to create a small fund through which a certain number of boys and girls who were discovered to be living in undesirable home surroundings, could be placed in suitable institutions or situations. But it was soon realised that if the hop-field work was to spread

and prosper and develop into an effective Christianising and moralising agency, the missionaries must keep in touch with the pickers and their families during the winter months. To assist in this object a Hoppers' Guild has been founded, in which hundreds of members, both adult and children, were enrolled last September, and their names and home addresses filed. It is hoped that the guild will form a nucleus of Catholic hoppers, who will recognise their obligation to seek work with a hop-grower within reach of a mission-tent, and will undertake to make the mission known among their comrades. In all parishes where guild members are numerous, Father Cuthbert, with the consent of the parish priest, has organised hopper-reunions, at which music and a friendly talk are the main features. Some of these have drawn large and enthusiastic audiences, and have already achieved something in bringing the Church and the people into closer touch. Coming to a Catholic concert is often a first step towards coming to Sunday Mass. A beginning, too, has been made in one or two of the poorest and most God-forsaken districts of South London to start clubs and mothers' meetings for the women and girls, and so utilise, in a permanent manner, the friendly and refining influences that first made themselves felt in the hop-fields.

Hitherto the London work has been mainly

tentative in character ; its ultimate developments are only vaguely foreshadowed, and all must depend upon the response made by the Catholic body to this newest Franciscan appeal on behalf of the poorest of God's poor. More workers, as I have said, are urgently needed, workers above all with hearts quickened to sympathy with the poor and talents to dedicate to their service. The hop-fields mission has, in truth, opened up a new sphere of activity for the lay-worker. The appeal is made primarily to the Franciscan tertiaries, but it includes all to whom the name of Francis of Assisi stands for something more than a poetic and gracious personality. Possibly some of these may find in the service of the hop-pickers just that practical outlet for aspirations and energies that has hitherto been denied them.

## CHAPTER XII

### RETREATS

So much has been said in some of the preceding chapters concerning our needs and our failings, that it is pleasant to turn to a sphere of activity which, though still in an early stage of development, yet contains the promise of splendid results in the future. I refer to retreats for working women and girls, to which happily we shall soon be able to add retreats for working-men. How potent a means they offer for personal sanctification is still only realised by those who have had some actual experience of their working. In the past, retreats have been regarded as a spiritual luxury for the pious rich: they invariably lasted a week and were quite beyond the means of the wage-earner. To-day, in a shortened, simplified form, they are coming to be accepted as a normal means of spiritual progress specially adapted to those who toil and labour. A very few years ago even priests would have derided the possibility—perhaps even the desirability—of the humbler

members of their flock giving up their work or their home duties and retiring for three days into a convent to say their prayers in peace. Yet it can be done, and is being done, both here and abroad, and I venture to prophesy that in a few years more, every well-organised town parish will offer some means for its members to take advantage of these retreats, of which the numbers increase year by year.

Nevertheless, retreats for the working-classes are not a sudden innovation among us. Since 1892, thanks in great measure to the zeal of the late Miss André, the Children of Mary of the South London parishes have had the benefit of an annual retreat at the Convent of Perpetual Adoration, Balham, and the numbers of the retreatants—to adopt the French term—has increased steadily. So, too, the good work has been carried on for many years, on a restricted scale, at St Gertrude's Convent, Manchester. Nearly twenty years ago, when Bishop of Salford, Cardinal Vaughan, who was keenly alive to the spiritual possibilities of the work, issued an appeal to his clergy, urging them to make use of the convent in the interests of their flock. When, at the Cardinal's repeated request, the Ladies of the Cenacle came to the Westminster Diocese, and founded their house at Stamford Hill, it was with the avowed purpose of offering the advantages of retreats to the working women and girls of



the metropolis. It must, however, be confessed that the enterprise languished in England, mainly owing to the fact that we possessed no widespread organisation for the recruiting of retreatants, and for diffusing information concerning the retreats in the right quarter. To-day this can be carried out through the settlements and the parochial works organised by the Ladies of Charity. It is one more proof, if proof were still needed, of the advantages of organisation. Thanks in great measure to the Council of the Association, the work of retreats within the last twelvemonth has been established on a permanent basis, with an honorary secretary for both north and south of the river, and with a complete programme of retreats for various classes of persons drawn up in advance for the whole year. Thus in this matter we are at length falling into line with our Catholic fellow-workers on the Continent.

For popular retreats, like many other good things, have come to us from Catholic countries. They have been tried with success in some of the cities of northern Italy, and also in France before the expulsion of the religious orders closed the available houses. At the Cenacle at Montmartre alone, over sixty retreats were given every year during the later period of its activity. But it is in Belgium they enjoy their widest diffusion and produce their most striking results. There the working-men vie with their women-folk in

appreciation of the advantages offered them. It was of course at the various Jesuit houses in Belgium that make a speciality of working-men's retreats, that the Rev. C. Plater acquired his well-known enthusiasm for *l'œuvre des retraites*, an enthusiasm which has recently taken concrete form in the acquisition by the Society of Compstall Hall, Marple, a roomy mansion in the environs of Manchester, where it is proposed to give a succession of three days' retreats to working-men. A similar work will shortly be inaugurated by the Benedictine fathers at Fort Augustus for the spiritual benefit of dwellers in dismal Glasgow. When will a religious house be placed at the disposal of the working-men of London? It was on a visit to Brussels some ten years ago that I myself first heard of this new method of evangelising the people from the Père van Langermeersch, S.J. Already, then, it was in full working order, although it has been far more widely disseminated since. The *œuvre des retraites* represented the spiritual side of a whole series of good works that the Jesuit had organised for the benefit of the work-girls of Brussels through the agency of his *Ligue des Femmes Chrétiennes*. A perpetual *recrutement* among the members of his various guilds and thrift societies was the means of bringing together some forty retreatants every month at the convent of Perpetual Adoration,

on the outskirts of Brussels. Père van Langermeersch assured me that the good done by these retreats was incalculable. Indeed, he considered they provided the only means of permanently influencing large masses of people, and of building up a spiritual *élite* with which to counteract the evil effects of indifferentism and unbelief. What this one association was carrying out in those days is to-day being repeated in many directions. The Dames du Cénacle have in a special degree made the work their own. They have now three houses in Belgium—at Brussels, Menin, and Yvoir, near Namur—at which retreats are held practically all through the year, and it is they alone of all the congregations in England who are able to devote themselves exclusively to this work, and to that of instructing children and converts. The convents in the Southwark diocese, which have co-operated in the past, and will continue to do so, can, unfortunately, only spare the necessary accommodation during the summer holidays. The enlargement of the Stamford Hill convent, just completed, will allow of some sixty women or girls, and some fifty ladies—entirely separate accommodation being provided for each class—to be received at one time. Eleven free retreats have been organised for the current year, intended respectively for married women, work-girls, First Communion children, and older school children.

The actual expense of each retreat is calculated at the extremely moderate sum of £8, and an effort is being made, to which an encouraging response has been received, to enlist a number of patronesses who will each guarantee one retreat in the year. Certainly it is difficult to think of an alms more fruitfully bestowed. A special organisation, to include both an annual retreat and a monthly lecture and reunion, was also successfully launched last Lent for the benefit of our elementary teachers, on whose religious spirit so much depends. It is to be hoped this new association will effect as much for the teachers as the Catholic Nurses' Guild has done for some years now for trained nurses, through the instrumentality of the Visitation Sisters at Harrow-on-the-Hill.

My own experience of these retreats is restricted to those for older women. I have more than once escorted some "mothers" to Stamford Hill for the women's retreat that is held annually in Passion week, and frankly, have been delighted with all I heard and saw. Nothing could exceed the kindness of the nuns in their efforts to make the women feel at home. Much of the free time was spent in the large convent garden and a mood of cheerful good-humour prevailed among the company. There is rest for the body to be thought of as well as benefit to the soul, and perhaps what these hard-worked mothers of families appreciated most was eating meals they

had not cooked themselves. To come down in the morning and find breakfast ready on the table was to them the height of luxury. For once they could say their prayers undisturbed by household cares; for once they could sit and rest without feeling they were neglecting some pressing duty, and, like children, they thoroughly enjoyed their holiday. And I would urge anyone who may have doubts as to whether the expense and trouble of these retreats are repaid, to come and see for herself when a retreat is in progress. Undoubtedly much drunkenness, much absence from Sunday Mass, much general slackness as to home duties, are the outcome, not of deliberate wrongdoing, but of utter discouragement, the result largely of overwork and inadequate food. And this can only be counteracted, not by indignant denunciation, but by building up the will afresh, by making the disconsolate backslider feel that an effort is worth while, and that others care if it is made or not. It is just this building up that a retreat effects as nothing else can. And the women are so conscious of it themselves that they are full of gratitude towards those who have come to their help.

As for the girls, a retreat has an excellent sobering effect on their high spirits and youthful giddiness. And when, in increasing numbers they give up the exciting joys of Bank holiday in order to spend the week-end within convent walls, with walks and games in the garden as their only

recreation, and yet declare on leaving that they have never felt happier in their lives, their "club lady," who has probably been the means of bringing them there, need have no doubts as to the excellence of their dispositions. One gathers, however, from the published reports of the *œuvre des retraites* abroad, that a good deal more disciplined piety can be demanded of French and Belgium girls than of our own. English girls of the working-classes lead much more free and independent lives with more varied opportunities of amusement than their continental sisters. It would, I think, be impracticable in England to recommend generally the monthly "day of retreat," which forms an important feature of the scheme abroad. Sunday Mass and monthly communion is all that it would be wise with our girls to insist on. If making a retreat involved a tacit expectation of somewhat rigid resolutions for the future, the retreat itself would be shunned. Neither would it answer to make the retreats themselves as strict as in some foreign houses. Rest and recreation must form a part of the programme for overworked anæmic city girls. Moreover, retreats are not intended for the *élite* among them, but for the average, even for the worldly and careless, and to make the conditions too rigorous would simply defeat the original object.

As regards the children's retreats, these may not appear necessary as long as our children are

educated in Catholic schools where catechism and preparation for the Sacraments can form the subject of daily instruction. But where our children of necessity attend council schools, and have to depend for preparation for First Communion and Confirmation on classes held outside school-hours, for which regular attendance is always so difficult to secure, short retreats offer a most valuable means of meeting a serious difficulty. Three days in a convent would probably teach the children more than weeks of intermittent instruction. It is possible that we shall have to fall back more and more on this aid to religious education, and I am inclined to believe that the separation of the special preparation needed for the Sacraments from the ordinary school curriculum may be attended with excellent results. There are certain drawbacks which we are apt to ignore in the too complete identification of religious and secular education given throughout by the same teachers in the same buildings. There may be at least a tacit assumption in the youthful mind that when attendance at the one ceases, the obligations of the other cease also. A friendship, however, between nuns and children connected only with happy memories, and wholly apart from the sometimes distasteful associations of compulsory education, provides a basis for future influence which the Dames du Cénacle may be trusted to use to excellent purpose.

## CHAPTER XIII

### HOME-WORK

SETTLEMENT work, clubs, work in the hop-fields, —all these, it will be said, require health, strength, and some measure of youthful energy. And what of the elderly and the semi-invalids and those who, having spent themselves freely in social service in the past, have to relinquish their activities into younger and more competent hands? It is a stage to which we all come by degrees. For myself, I am holding in reserve various attractive occupations, which are to make the joy of my declining years. It is a good plan to prepare for old age before it comes, and the more deliberate good works, at once restful and beneficent, can be sandwiched into one's more active life, little by little, until they come at length to fill, not the last, but the first place among one's daily interests.

One such resource is undoubtedly provided by membership of the Catholic Needlework Guild. Two articles a year, useful serviceable garments for poor people, are all that is required of members,



the idea being to have a large roll of members, so that many shall do a little, not a few, much. One would have imagined that so facile a duty for so excellent an object would have met with a generous response, but it has scarcely been so. The Southwark branch of the Catholic Needlework Guild is the only one that has been worked up to anything like its proper strength, thanks in great measure to the untiring zeal of the Lady President; and Southwark last year attained to the proud total of 10,000 garments, distributed among poverty-stricken parishes and necessitous institutions. It is impossible to over-estimate the gratitude with which they must have been received.

The choice of garments lies wholly with the maker, but I believe it is understood that she is not to fulfil her obligation in baby-socks, and she is urged to avoid the use of inflammable flannel-ette. I think it would be a good plan if local secretaries were supplied with well-cut patterns to send out when requested. Some people imagine anything will "do" for the poor, but it won't do. A badly cut garment will drag and split at the seams the first time its wearer does any hard work. I myself have seen the most impossibly shaped articles of clothing sent in to the "poor-stall" of a bazaar, that no normal human being could get into: frocks long enough for a girl of twelve, and so narrow across the chest that they would barely do for a child of six, or, again, with

sleeves several inches too long, or possibly several inches too short. Not long ago I heard of a whole batch of petticoats sent in to a needlework guild centre so narrow that they all had to be re-made with an extra breadth of material let in. The first essential, then, for ladies wishing to join the guild is to obtain good reliable patterns. Again, some people appear to entertain the stern notion that an ugly thing is somehow more suitable for a poor child than a pretty one; or perhaps they only labour under the false impression that to be useful, a dress must be unbecoming. It is, of course, foolish to buy gaudy, flimsy material, or to encourage a taste for cheap finery, but do let our gifts be attractive, especially where children are concerned. Why should the poor things wear hideous frocks, when with a little care and trouble something at once serviceable and pretty can be devised? The children of the poor are as sensitive about their appearance as the children of the rich, and to present them with clothes that excite the ridicule of their school-fellows can scarcely be described as an act of charity. Surely the giving of clothes should afford an opportunity for educating the taste of both parents and children in what is at once serviceable, hygienic, and becoming, as well as for demonstrating the superior qualities of home-made, hand-sewn clothing over the ready-made, machine-sewn garments the modern mother is apt to indulge in.

These little difficulties of taste and individuality are successfully overcome by a long-established association in our midst, in whose objects needle-work plays an important part. For the Work for Poor Churches, which has its English headquarters at the Convent of Perpetual Adoration, Nightingale Square, Balham, the nuns not only supply directions and measurements for vestments, etc., but also, when requested, the actual material cut out. Associates can either join one of the weekly work-meetings held both at Balham and at various centres in London, or can do the needle-work at their own homes. Subscriptions, of course, are appreciated; so, too, are gifts of silk, satin, lace, linen, or anything that by feminine ingenuity can be used for the service or decoration of the altar. Thus the work is one to which everybody, rich and poor, young and old, can contribute, and which supplies a very real need. For the wants of poor churches are literally endless. It is impossible for a small mission in an industrial neighbourhood to provide the many necessities for the decent furnishing of even the humblest chapel, and many articles in everyday use require frequent renewing. Clearly it is more useful, though less artistically satisfying, to devote one's time to simple vestments for struggling little missions, than to exquisitely embroidered ones for churches with large congregations. This, at least, has always been the view of the association,

for whom neat and accurate sewing is the only essential. And it is a view supported by Pius X., who, as everyone knows, has requested that the gifts offered him this year on the occasion of his sacerdotal jubilee, should be such as could be put to daily use in the impoverished churches of Italy. Very appropriately the community at Nightingale Square has been appointed the accredited agents through whose hands all the jubilee gifts of this nature are to pass. This fact, together with the recently established winter exhibition of vestments at the Cathedral Hall, previous to the annual distribution, ought to bring this most practical association into greater prominence, and secure for it the extra workers to whom it could easily give employment. It is pleasant to hear of over 140 sets of vestments distributed in a single year among home and foreign missions, besides many altar requisites; but it is certain that even that number did not satisfy all the petitions made to the association.

A good many women, however, dislike needlework, and not a few do it very inefficiently. If some of these are in search of a useful home occupation, they might like to experiment in transcribing books for the blind in Braille type. This is a work of charity for which there is always a small, but steady demand. The British and Foreign Blind Association (206 Great Portland Street), has of course, produced Braille books in

great numbers for many years, and has taught the blind both to read and to write it. There is also a National Lending Library for the blind, with premises in Queen's Road, Bayswater, from which a large amount of general literature in Braille type is distributed. It is obvious, however, that our Catholic blind have special needs that no unsectarian society would meet. Our whole devotional literature would have been closed to them, had it not been for the initiative of the Hon. Mrs Fraser, who not only writes in Braille herself, but is at all times willing to initiate others in the art. Thanks mainly to her exertions, several hundred Catholic books are now at the disposal of the blind. Very many have been selected from among the admirable little volumes published by the Catholic Truth Society—meditation-books, lives of saints, the annotated Gospels, tales, etc.—but there are also quite a number of long works such as *Callista*, *Fabiola*, *The King's Achievement*, and Canon Sheehan's *My New Curate*, works, the copying of which, is no light task. All these Braille volumes are stored by the Catholic Truth Society (69 Southwark Bridge Road), and can be borrowed at the rate of 1s. a quarter, the borrower to pay carriage both ways. Quite recently a concession has been made by the post-office, allowing all Braille books to be sent by post at an extremely low rate, no slight boon where large parcels of bulky sheets are concerned.

As regards the production of these sheets, the process is simple, if a little tedious, and can be learnt by anyone who spells correctly, and has a fair education. As everyone knows, the transcribing is done with a small style on large sheets of specially prepared thick paper, the letters being represented by a series of dots, which, when the sheet is reversed, can be traced with his finger-tips by the blind reader. The perpetual pricking motion of transcription is sometimes found a little jerky by persons in delicate health, and the slight ticking noise produced may prove irritating to people of highly strung nerves. Otherwise—writing as one who has had no personal experience in the matter—there seem to be no drawbacks to the occupation. The materials required—a wooden frame with metal guide, a style, a small bone eraser and folio sheets of thick paper—are quite inexpensive, and can all be obtained from the British and Foreign Blind Association. The process of learning both to read and write Braille is, however, a good deal more complicated than it used to be, and is not unlike acquiring shorthand. All books, nowadays, are produced in the revised Braille, which has many more contractions than the old simple Braille, which had to be pricked out almost literally letter by letter. The advantage of the revised form is that it allows of far greater compression; the drawback is that blind people of limited education and intelligence can scarcely

hope to master it. Probably, therefore, as an act of charity, the transcribing of hymns, prayers, etc., in the old Braille, for the use of blind inmates of workhouses and other institutions, will continue to be necessary. Even educated people learning to write in the revised Braille will be apt to find that, as with shorthand, it is far easier to learn to write it than to read it, and this must be acquired, otherwise the accuracy of one's own transcribing cannot be tested. Finally, I should explain that the fact that the British and Foreign Blind Association has recently set up expensive machinery for copying Braille books, does not do away with the original necessity of first transcribing the books into Braille writing, although it has, of course, immensely facilitated the process of multiplication. As regards most Catholic books, it is probable that the demand for any particular work will never warrant the printing by machinery, and consequently Catholic writers in Braille need entertain no immediate fear that the need for their beneficent services will pass away.

The diffusion of Catholic literature might fitly occupy some of the spare time of those who are debarred from very active work. Much good is done and much real pleasure given by supplying Catholic papers to the Catholic inmates of any neighbouring institution, workhouse, hospital, working-men's club, boys' home, or whatever it may be. I have learnt through personal know-

ledge how keenly Catholic papers are appreciated by workhouse inmates, and what eager competition there is to obtain possession of a copy. We could all do something in this direction with our newspapers and magazines, but it should be done regularly and methodically, for the more recent the papers the greater amount of enjoyment they afford. The Catholic Reading Guild, of which Dom Gilbert Higgins is president, exists for the very purpose of developing and organising such distribution, and within its sphere of activity it includes public libraries. These institutions being supported from the rates, will seldom purchase what is regarded as denominational literature, but if properly approached the authorities will often consent to place Catholic publications on the reading-room tables. The needs of our Catholic soldiers and sailors must also be remembered, and these can be reached most effectually through the Messenger of the Sacred Heart (Wimbledon), which has organised a regular service for the supply of troops and warships at foreign stations.

Then there is the promotion of Catholic Truth Society literature. Everyone to-day is familiar with the admirable work of this society, which has done more than any other agency in these islands for the diffusion of good and cheap literature among Catholics. But people do not always realise how much they might help by encouraging the distribution more especially of the penny



publications. The society never has any difficulty in obtaining literature to produce: the difficulty sometimes is to get it into the hands of the readers for whom it is intended. If well-to-do people, besides becoming members, would make a point of obtaining new publications from the depot (69 Southwark Bridge Road, S.E.), keeping them on their tables, making them known, and distributing them in schools, clubs, and so on, they would help very effectually in a good work. The honorary secretaries of the society receive frequent testimonies as to the help this or that publication has been in bringing about a conversion, and such results are of course dependent on a very wide circulation even beyond the ranks of the Catholic readers for whom the books and pamphlets of the society are primarily intended.

## CHAPTER XIV

### WORK IN THE COUNTRY

THERE exists a widespread conviction, and one which I fear the foregoing chapters have done nothing to dispel, that to engage in useful social work it is essential to live in London, or at least in some large industrial centre. The belief is all the more deeply rooted that it is in harmony with the general conviction that brings would-be wage-earners, male and female, in a steady ceaseless stream into the towns, to the aggravation of all existing industrial problems. If it is scarcely correct to say that cities are over-supplied with social workers, it is emphatically true to say that our rural districts are markedly understaffed, that voluntary workers with any broad social sense are lamentably few, and that on all sides beneficent *œuvres* languish or die out for want of competent people to direct and guide them. Even so popular a society as the Children's Country Holiday Fund is confronted with a chronic difficulty in regard to a sufficiency of country correspondents, the lack of

whom has caused the loss of many districts to the society. The same trouble recurs in connection with the boarding-out of poor-law children, which is only feasible where a local visiting committee will undertake the supervision of the homes. These are but two examples out of many. Indeed the familiar cry, "Back to the land," which represents one of the sanest aspirations of contemporary politics, has an application no less insistent for the social worker than for the wage-earner. Unhappily no one as yet has written for us an English equivalent of "*La Terre qui Meurt*" to show us the tragedy of the forsaken soil in all its pathos.

The economic reasons for this perpetual shifting of the population from country to town are too complex for discussion here. Briefly, the higher wages prevalent in urban districts are the main inducement. But there are two others that come well within the sphere of activity of the social worker: one is ignorance of the true conditions of the labour market in industrial centres; the second is the deadly dullness of village life. The young people, and usually the most competent and the most enterprising, fly from the stagnation of their surroundings—the narrow interests, the lack of opportunity for self-amelioration, the low wages—under the mistaken impression that a town, from the mere fact of its size, must offer better chances and wider facilities for a prosperous career. Only too often their dream suffers a rude awaken-

ing in the casual wards or workhouses of London. At best they have exchanged a country cottage for a single room in a tenement house, fresh air and country lanes for the crowded street, and the easier, simpler conditions of rural life for acute industrial competition.

The problem, then, is: How to keep a village population at home. Obviously the first duty of the social worker living in the country is to devote himself to the needs of his neighbours. Here as elsewhere, charity begins at home, and to forsake the country for the apparently wider opportunities of usefulness offered by, say, an East-end settlement, is simply helping to perpetuate, as far as a single individual may, a national evil which it will require all the wisdom of our politicians to cure. For my own part, I am inclined to put more faith in the beneficent activities of the local philanthropist than in the effects of legislation. When once the real needs of a rural population are grasped, and the time-honoured distribution of soup and flannel petticoats as a remedy for poverty firmly relegated to the background, it is surprising how many possibilities of progress will present themselves. Those who are in a position to facilitate the obtaining of garden allotments by the villagers, or the acquiring of land under the valuable Small Holdings Act of 1907, can touch the root of the village problem more effectually than in any

other way. "Land-hunger" exists in England as elsewhere, and even the eighth of an acre to be cultivated in one's own way for one's own benefit, may prove a stronger bond with which to bind a man to his native village than any social or family tie. So, too, every single cottage built on hygienic principles is, in most districts, an inestimable boon, and may be the direct means of preventing a young couple from emigrating to a town. It is by no means uncommon for forty or fifty applications to be received for a single cottage on the tenancy becoming vacant, and marriages have to be postponed for months and even years, owing to the impossibility for the young people to find a roof under which to start housekeeping.

It is not given to all of us to confer benefits on this scale, but everyone can do something towards the education and entertainment of his village neighbours. And it is just teaching and amusing that they stand in such urgent need of. The first necessity is, of course, some sort of club or evening classes for boys and young men, if they are to be kept from spending their evenings in loafing and drinking. Every form of technical training, in which our elementary schools are still so lamentably deficient—wood-carving, basket-weaving, brass or iron work—is of value, but these must be pursued in a methodical manner. The main difficulty is the securing of a competent

teacher, but here the Home Arts and Industries Association, already referred to,<sup>1</sup> can be usefully invoked. An annual exhibition of work done, held, for instance, in connection with the local flower show, encourages perseverance, and helps to provide a market for the articles produced. In the winter months popular lectures of all kinds should be organised, and the gift of a good magic lantern is an essential preliminary. A speciality should be made of everything that can bear usefully on country life—bee-keeping, new methods of poultry-feeding, the advantages of keeping a goat, and so on. Where allotments are available a seed-club can be set on foot in connection with some reliable seed merchant, such as the well-known "One and All" agricultural association (92 Long Acre, W.C.). Cottagers often have to rely on the most inferior seeds, and their gardening efforts suffer in consequence. These improving occasions should of course be judiciously varied by an occasional dance, or by private theatricals, in which the village will take a keen interest, especially if some of the villagers themselves are among the actors. Indeed, in all this the main secret is to use and develop native talent, to train the club or institute members to rule themselves, to get up their own concerts, and invite their own lecturers. Nothing is duller

<sup>1</sup> Page 24.

than having everything done for one, however well done it may be, and if in towns one's efforts are concentrated on weaning our young people from undesirable joys, in villages the primary necessity is to excite real tangible effort, where, outside the necessity of daily labour, all is apt to be a dreary blank. That all this requires time and patience, and that one's early efforts may not impossibly be met by an apparently invincible apathy, is perfectly true. Yet one of the encouraging features of social work in country districts is the facility with which really friendly relations with one's poorer neighbours can be established and used as a basis for social effort. In London, acquaintanceship is far less spontaneous; the professional beggar has to be circumvented, the people who need help hunted out, and it is not always easy to eliminate the suspicion of patronage from one's relations with them. Moreover, the problem of poverty as it presents itself in any large industrial area is so vast, so complicated, so utterly beyond the alleviating power of any one individual, that there must be an element of sadness and hopelessness in one's work. In a village, on the contrary, everything is on a manageable scale; if you are a poor-law guardian, you can know personally every inmate in the workhouse; if you work among the boys, you know that not a single youth in the parish can take to bad ways without your hearing of it; and

when cases of destitution occur, you are at least in a position to know the true facts of the story. There is still, happily, so much friendly rendering of mutual small services in a country district that the rigid division between giver and receiver is to a great extent obliterated. Indeed, the poor no less than the rich can take their share in the work of social betterment.

This aspect of the problem, so often overlooked, was admirably brought out in a recent article in the *Crucible* (June 1907), by Miss Leigh of Woodchester Park, Gloucestershire, one of the most successful of our Catholic social workers. Writing of the many advantages of boarding-out poor-law children in country cottages, Miss Leigh points out very rightly that a system "must be a good one which gives the working-classes an opportunity of helping in the work of rescue." It is admitted that the foster-parents receive a weekly sum for their trouble; none the less "the training and shelter of a good Catholic home are not marketable goods, and there are many things these poor people can give that no money can buy." What is true of boarding-out is equally true of children's country holiday work. Let either be done in a spirit of commercialism, and it loses more than half its value. And it depends in great measure on the local worker, on her teaching and influence, and on her own appreciation of the social possibilities of the work, whether the higher view shall not prevail



and the boarding-out be undertaken in a spirit in which women will gladly offer all the advantages of their own homes to the delicate or destitute children of others. Under such circumstances it is they, surely, who are the real benefactors in a far fuller sense than the "country correspondents" or members of visiting committees can possibly be.

A work that falls specially within the province of women, and the usefulness of which in villages can scarcely be over-estimated, is the establishment of certificated nurses to attend sick people in their own homes. They are a boon immensely appreciated by the poor, and the expense can be partially met, and all danger of pauperisation avoided, by arranging a scheme of "benefit-subscribers," *i.e.*, those who pay a small annual subscription in order to secure for themselves the services of the nurse in case of illness. The actual nursing, if it is to be carried out in a thorough manner, will always require some supplementing in the way of invalid food, the loan of sick-room requisites or even convalescent letters, and so paves the way to much beneficent activity on the part of resident ladies, over and above the primary necessity of providing funds. Such local nursing associations, which may be usefully affiliated to the Queen Victoria Jubilee Institute or any larger nursing organisation, are now worked in many places on recognised lines. They might, however, accomplish even more

good than they do, if by means of the nurses regular classes could be held and practical leaflets distributed on elementary matters of family hygiene and cleanliness, the management of babies, the care of consumptive patients, and so on. Infant mortality in what should be healthy villages is often lamentably high, owing to improper feeding and widespread neglect of the simplest laws of health, and educative work on the lines of the St Pancras School for mothers already described may be as urgently needed in a country hamlet as in a London slum.

I have been taking somewhat for granted that would-be Catholic workers in the country may find themselves somewhat isolated as far as distinctive Catholic work is concerned. Their nearest mission has, of course, a first claim upon them, but apart from this it must often happen that there are few, if any, opportunities for social work on a Catholic basis. That is not to say that there is no work for a Catholic to do. It is surely wise for us to take a share, wherever possible, in every movement that makes for social progress. Only too frequently we are still regarded somewhat as a people apart, with interests—or lack of interests—that mark us off in some derogatory fashion from our neighbours. The first necessity is to break down this imaginary barrier, to show that just because we are Catholics we care, not less, but more, for our neighbour's welfare, and that no

moral and social agitation making either for temperance, or for better education, or for healthier conditions of life, leave us indifferent. This is far more easily accomplished than timid people may suppose. I have known parishes where individual Catholics by simply acting in this sense have come to fill a prominent place in the life of their locality, to be indispensable factors in every local good work, to be sought in counsel by people of every creed. It is superfluous to point out how much good such persons do both as citizens and as Catholics. Indeed were they the rule, instead of the exception, the progress of Catholicism in England would be far more rapid than it is.

It must be remembered too that no one can tell how many lapsed or indifferent Catholics there may not be in any district until prolonged search has been made for them. Even the opening of a mission church does not always bring their existence to light. Timidity and fear of ridicule from neighbours keep them silent, and they will only make themselves known to someone whose friendship they have already tested. In the discharge of any social work, and more particularly as a member of an elected body, such as guardians, or district councillors, one is certain of opportunities for unearthing and befriending these somewhat weak-kneed brethren.

If, however, Catholics may sometimes be at

a loss for congenial work in their own locality, the difficulty vanishes forthwith if they once resolve to share their country joys with less fortunate town-dwellers. They will quickly discover that for the simple giving of pleasure, no one is in so advantageous a position as the owner of a country house, large or small, within easy distance of a town. I confess it often seems to me people scarcely use their garden and grounds for the benefit of others as much as they might, not from deliberate indifference, but just from want of thought, and from failing to realise how much pleasure they are in a position to confer with a quite insignificant expenditure of money and trouble. Take the question of garden produce alone. At certain seasons, even with quite a small garden, one has many more flowers than one can use. Then there are always times when lettuces run to seed for lack of being eaten, and beans grow stringy and herbaceous borders have to be vigorously cleared out. It only requires a little thought and the cost of carriage to send off an acceptable hamper in one direction or another. If a rule were made and rigidly enforced, that nothing, under any circumstances, was ever to be wasted, it is surprising how many useful ways of disposing of garden produce would suggest themselves. And if this is true of the small garden, how much more true must it not be of the large—though here, I confess, the rights

and perquisites of that stern tyrant, the head-gardener, which may not be interfered with, make it less easy to carry out beneficent little designs. I suppose that is why—it is a fact I have established beyond dispute—the smaller the garden the more generous the owner, and that the greater the acreage the less is there apparently to give away.

Then there is the placing of one's grounds at the disposal of parties of poor people from London. Surely everyone could do this two or three times every summer? I know that our English working-classes are, unfortunately, somewhat destructive, that roots are apt to be pulled up, and trees damaged, and paper and orange peel flung about. But these are faults that can be cured by refining influences, and the invitations must of course be issued with discretion. It is clearly a mistake to expect a boys' club to spend an afternoon on the trim lawn of a villa, but wherever a field can be given up to rounders and races even the most exuberant parties can be entertained without danger of serious damage. I remember holding an *impromptu* Sunday school during the hopping season in the kindly lent grounds of a Kentish fruit-grower, within sight of a venerable plum-tree heavily laden with purple fruit, and the breaking up of my catechism class was signalled by a wild rush of all my scholars for the plums on which their eyes had feasted throughout the lesson. The

results were somewhat disastrous, but the spot had clearly been badly chosen for imparting religious instruction. Other people besides children have to be considered in this connection, and if a mothers' meeting or a girls' club can be entertained to tea in a shady garden at the close of a country ramble, instead of partaking of the noisy joys of a cheap excursion to Margate or Southend, the gain is very real. Indeed the list of town-dwellers who would gratefully appreciate an invitation of this nature is capable of endless extension.

A Catholic friend of mine has solved the problem of country work by running a training home for girls close to her own country house, the pupils being selected by the workers of a London settlement. Such a home, in the country, has the advantage of not only building up the girls' physical health—a most important consideration where anæmic London girls are concerned—but also of instilling into them some appreciation of country interests; and the home being small, it is possible to conduct it on less rigid lines than the ordinary orphanage or convent school, and so to prepare the girls more suitably for what is expected of them in service. More training homes on these lines would be a great boon to our Catholic girls, by giving to more of them the opportunity of making a good start in life, and there is much to be said in favour of locating them in the country.

Another set of people whose urgent needs cannot be overlooked are invalids and convalescents, and perhaps still more, because fewer people remember them, the over-driven work-women and mothers of families who cannot spare the time for three weeks in a convalescent home, but who could, and would, snatch three or four days' much-needed rest if someone would offer them country hospitality. Few of us can indulge in the pleasant luxury of supporting a convalescent home, but it might be possible for many more of us during the summer months to set aside a room in the house, or in some neighbouring cottage for delicate people who could not afford to pay for a holiday for themselves. At a cost of, say, 10s. a week, one could give to a succession of people all the pleasures of country life together with a renewed provision of health and strength for the year. Moreover, an institution, however admirably conducted, always has drawbacks, and is distasteful to many, whereas family hospitality, offered in the right spirit, is a source of pure enjoyment. I know a poor Irish widow, employed in a laundry, for whom the one bright spot in her laborious life is her annual holiday of four days spent at a country cottage, where she is always welcome, and where she insists on doing so much energetic gardening that she fully repays her maintenance. It is when one knows the touching gratitude of poor people for acts of real kindness—as distinct from mere alms-giving—that

one longs to see the number increased of those who give freely of themselves and their substance in order that the burden of other lives may be lightened and the sum of human suffering diminished.





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